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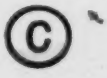
Mercury Models:
Postmodernism, Simulacra, and New Heavy Metal

by

David Warren Lloyd 

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Mercury Models: Postmodernism, Simulacra, and New Heavy Metal* submitted by David Warren Lloyd in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Comparative Literature.

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Abstract

Contemporary heavy metal rock bands are displaying and giving voice to postmodern qualities which are similar to those described in critical works such as Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*. The ubiquitous presence of today's communications media has caused popular culture to be permeated and defined by simulacra—reproductions of reproductions. In my thesis I argue that the music of Korn, Deftones, Limp Bizkit, Marilyn Manson, and Rob Zombie demonstrate the pervasiveness of the postmodern phenomena identified by critics such as Baudrillard and, equally importantly, point to the paradoxes inherent in the condition of postmodernity. My study begins with an examination of the history of new heavy metal and proceeds to a close analysis of the lyrics and the music, pointing the way to a better understanding of this particular form of popular culture.

This work is dedicated to Nasrin Rahimieh,
Janet Ould, and Barbra Churchill, to
whom I grateful for their infinite
support, guidance, inspiration,
and friendship, and to my
mother, Edie Lloyd, to
whom I am grateful
for her infinite
everything.

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Introduction

Something takes a part of me
Something lost and never seen
Every time I start to believe
Something's raped and taken from me

- From "Freak on a Leash," by Korn

We live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning.

- From *Simulacra and Simulation,* by Jean Baudrillard

Popular music, since it began to get rowdy in the 1950s, has reflected the concerns and anxieties of North America's younger generation. From the Everly Brothers' "Wake Up, Little Suzie" to "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana, popular musicians have acted as a voice for the teenage generation, speaking their minds, addressing their joys and worries. Also, the younger generation is becoming increasingly sensitive to the state of the culture that surrounds them. Students around the world are known for their outrage at injustice, for their joy in celebration, and their general cultural perceptiveness. Recently, certain segments of music popularity charts have been occupied by some alarming music. Rap music, dominated by male African-Americans, has been hyper-excessively violent and misogynist, and is often admired by its fans simply for the audacity of its praise of criminal activity—although some praise it for depicting the grim reality of the lives of urban African-Americans. Rock music has also been making some alarming statements, which are not the same as in rap music. A new variety of popular music, which has fused elements of heavy metal and African-American hiphop music, has reached #1 ranking on popularity charts.

This music—which I have chosen to term "new metal," although it eludes existing labels—is characterized by some unconventional and startling qualities.

As North American culture has become more permeated with information and communication technology, the qualities and characteristics associated with postmodernism have become stronger and more common. As information—in forms that vary from street billboards and print media through radio and television to the internet and virtual reality—fills our environment, the relationship between culture and media seems to have reversed. Formerly, it can be argued, culture determined the content of communications media, and media reflected culture. In other words, real-life, actual activities, beliefs, and identities of North American individuals (culture, reality) were reflected and reproduced in information-replicas such as advertisements, news programs, and entertainment products like film and television (media, reproduction). This has gradually changed so that it seems increasingly that the vast amount of information present in our environment is determining the fabric of our culture. Real life and culture began to reflect what was being portrayed in communications media. People turned to media representations as a source of identity; the truth and reality of the world began to be determined by the way they were portrayed in media.

The unsettling repercussions of this information-culture phenomenon were felt by the modernists in the middle of this century and have continued to grow stronger with time. Postmodernism reflected the growing intensity of the effects of our information saturation, and now it appears that we are entering a post-postmodernism which is continuing the trends set in motion by the growth of communication

technology. Today's state of affairs is visibly a progression from the recent past because now it appears that the relation between culture and media has eroded. There no longer appears to be any distance, direction, or order of operations between real culture and the information contained in communications media. They have become intertwined and are so closely related that they are now inextricable from each other. We have entered what Jean Baudrillard calls "hyperreality," in his book entitled *Simulacra and Simulation*, where "the medium and the real are now in a single nebula whose truth is indecipherable" (83). Baudrillard's concept of "simulacra"—reproduction without original—is the embodiment of this condition, a sign that is "never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (6). The existence of simulacra would not necessarily be threatening, were it not for the super-accelerated circulation of simulacra performed by information and communication technology. The pace of advertising has risen to the point that the sole referentiality it retains is to capital gain. All sense of value, truth, and identity has disappeared in the frantic circulation of the simulacra that advertising has become, which Baudrillard calls the "hypermarket," or "ground-zero advertising." In such a state of affairs "there is the sound track, the image track, just as in life there is the work track, the leisure track, the transport track, etc., all enveloped in the advertising track" (91). As Baudrillard illustrates, advertising, at its now maniacal rate, devours every sign and every image. Anything one could possibly want to think, do, or be is now always already taken up by advertising and made into a flat, pixelated sign that refers to nothing but itself, to other such signs, and to money. When one looks at Las Vegas, for instance,

> one sees that advertising is not what brightens or decorates the walls, it is what effaces the walls, effaces the streets, the facades, and all the architecture, effaces any support and any depth, and that it is this liquidation, this reabsorption of everything into the surface (whatever signs circulate there) that plunges us into this stupefied, hyperreal euphoria that we would not exchange for anything else, and that is the empty and inescapable form of seduction. (Baudrillard 91-2)

We have indeed become subject to this "stupefied, hyperreal euphoria," and as a response, we are given to "[p]anic-stricken production of the real and of the referential, parallel to and greater than the panic of material production" (7) which is great indeed. Consequently, as Baudrillard suggests, it seems that "all of society is irremediably contaminated by this mirror of madness that it has held up to itself" (9). Baudrillard has recognized and diagnosed the condition of today's culture and given words to the phenomenon; I intend to demonstrate that new metal has recognized this condition, experienced it, reacted to it, and given voice to the paradoxes inherent in the evocation of the hyperreal.

New metal is extremely popular right now, and many devotees of heavy metal and hard rock music have welcomed it with joy as the return of heavy metal to its rightfully acclaimed position in our culture. Other followers of heavy and hard music have deplored it as a softening of heavy metal, as heavy metal watered down for the middle-class, video-watching, t-shirt-buying masses. No matter what one thinks about new metal, the fact is that it is loud, aggressive, profane, dissonant, chaotic, offensive, and generally contrary to hegemonic norms of popular music (those generally being

qualities that are "easy" to listen to and acceptable to a wide range of audiences). What are even more striking are the qualities of the music that seem to reflect Baudrillard's diagnosis of today's hyperrreal culture. New metal lyrics are often about the experience of a fragmented identity unknowable to the self, about the inability to discern reality from illusion, about suspicion and distrust of almost everyone including oneself, about an uncertain and unknowable future, about the roles of money and fame in our culture, about satirizing past popular forms, and about issues of authenticity.

Before continuing, it is vital for me to discuss several details regarding the ideas I will develop, the terms I will use, and the musicians I will study. "Authenticity" is an essential concept to new metal, and to my analysis. It should be clear that I do not believe or intend to illustrate that new metal artists are authentic; "authenticity" will merely be a value-free (i.e., good vs. bad) term used to designate certain aspects of popular music. This term has been plagued with definition problems for many years, and my use of the term will be arbitrarily limited to how it is understood in new metal and rock music. In my writing, "authenticity" will mean, generally, a form of honesty. An artist who is "in it for the money" is not authentic, for they are likely creating work using as a guiding principle what will sell, rather than giving primacy to creative urges, their life experiences, their emotions, and their personal and political beliefs. A musical group that is together because the members were the most marketable respondents to a newspaper advertisement is not authentic (such as The Spice Girls); a group that is together because their musical tastes, styles, and abilities are well-suited to each other (such as new metal groups) is authentic. This also means that they "act like themselves" and do not adopt particular poses for the

sake of the music. Thus a performer who acts kind and amicable onstage, but who is "really" unkind and disrespectful offstage (in real life), or a performer who acts unhappy, dissatisfied, angry and/or disturbed, but who, offstage, is perfectly well-adjusted and content, is not authentic. Today there is a recognition and acceptance that in the performance of popular music the portrayal of emotion is not limited to the depiction of one's own experience. The term "authenticity," as I will use it, will also designate a certain originality—work that is different from all that came before it. Thus The Backstreet Boys are not authentic, for almost nothing differentiates them from The New Kids On The Block, except that their popularity occurred at different times, and not even that sets The Backstreet Boys apart from other "boy groups" aimed at the money available to the female pre-teen demographic group, such as 98° and 'NSync. While every new metal artist shares some qualities with past musical artists, each group/artist presents a quality that is novel and particular to them. The concept of authenticity has become extremely difficult for new metal artists to navigate because every image, sign, word, and action is either part of the past lexicon of profit-seeking media imagery, or becomes part of that lexicon almost instantaneously. Because of this process, sincerity is almost impossible for anyone to believe or take seriously; now even the artists themselves are skeptical about their own sincerity. In a culture where doubt reigns, authenticity is becoming increasingly elusive. It is important to note that, while musicians and fans may attach a value-judgement to this term/concept and claim it to be a good quality or a bad one, I will use it non-judgementally. According to my operative definition of "authenticity," new metal does have many authentic aspects, but is also blatantly inauthentic in several

ways. Thus I am not attempting to demonstrate any inherent "goodness" or flaw in new metal, or any other type of music. It is impossible to tell whether any performer truly does not act differently onstage than offstage, for they could be acting differently in every interview, photograph, performance, and public appearance. This conundrum is similar to the cliché of the tree falling and making no sound because no one is present to hear it. Because I do not know any of the artists personally, I will not pretend to know anything of their "true" personalities and will take the statements in interviews and press releases of all artists to be true.

Another concept central to my analysis is postmodernism. Since there has been little agreement on the nature and meaning of postmodernism, it is necessary for me to specify what I mean in using the term and others such as "the postmodern experience." In his book entitled *Popular Music, Gender, and Postmodernism*, Neil Nehring outlines aspects of postmodernism which overlap with what is expressed by new metal. In particular, two features discussed by Nehring serve as useful frames of reference to my analysis:

> - Philosophies such as antifoundationalism, denying any grounds for "truth," but especially French poststructuralist theory concerned with the frailty of the individual, now the "subject" in the sense of being ruled (or dispersed, or dispossessed, etc.) by the "structure" of language, and through it the structures of ideology and power
> - Either sweeping criticism or uncritical celebration of mass culture (or the consumer-information-postindustrial-services society). (Nehring 5)

In terms of the body of work that I will be examining, several points from Linda Hutcheon's piece on postmodernism in the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* are also relevant. As I have pointed out with the help of Jean Baudrillard's "hypermarket," new metal appears to be informed by what Fredric Jameson calls "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (qtd. in Hutcheon 612), by what Jean-François Lyotard calls "the general condition of knowledge in times of informational technology" (Hutcheon 612), and by Baudrillard's own "substitution of the simulacrum for the real" (Hutcheon 612). More specifically, I will understand "postmodernism" to refer to discourses that "tend to use but also abuse, install but also subvert, conventions, and they usually negotiate these contradictions through irony ... and parody ... inscribing yet also subverting various aspects of a dominant culture: however critical the subversion, there is still a complicity that cannot be denied" (Hutcheon 612). Another facet of postmodernism to which I will be referring is that postmodern works "de-naturalize the things we take as natural or given," (Hutcheon 612). Thus I take the postmodern experience, in this analysis, to be the effects of those characteristics I have outlined: suspicion of everything and everybody because nothing and nobody is truly knowable; anxiety about an unknowable future; self-loathing, incomprehensible utterances; escapist recycling of pop culture images because of the perceived impossibility of uttering anything new; and a universal doubt which plagues everything.

The musical terms I will use are a matter of convention. In my analysis, "rock" refers to any and all of the popular guitar-based, song-format music driven by a solid rhythm, from the early 1950s until today, and the term covers many different styles

from The Beatles and The Beach Boys through Janis Joplin and Led Zeppelin to Nirvana and Guns And Roses. The definition of "heavy metal" is more difficult to pinpoint as it travels along the spectrum between rock and heavy metal, and as bands get "heavier." I use the term "heavy metal," or "metal" for short, to refer to a style of rock which began in the 1970s with Black Sabbath and is generally more abrasive, dissonant, louder, and masculine/macho. (Possible exceptions include bands of the 1980s like Poison, Twisted Sister, AC/DC, etc.) "Punk" began as a counter-cultural movement in England in the 1970s, based heavily on class-conflicts. It was characterized by musical simplicity, harsh, abrasive, and distorted sounds, and an angry indifference to anyone's opinion or judgment. Punks wore ripped clothing, elaborate and unconventional hairstyles, and harsh jewelry such as studs, spikes, and pins. Their lyrics were profane and anti-authoritarian. There is now a new form of punk in the United States which has almost no relation to the original movement other than the age of the fans and musicians involved and their desire to resist authority. I will not discuss this type of punk. "Grunge" was a short-lived "movement" of sorts in the early 1990s that fell somewhere between punk, rock, and metal. It centered around Seattle, Washington, and was focused on a desire to return to "good" guitar-rock. Grunge bands differed vastly: Nirvana played simple three-chord, pop-ish screeches. Screaming Trees wrote neo-psychedelia which hailed the late 1960s and early 1970s. Mudhoney seemed to fuse country and punk. Soundgarden wrote heavier, technically advanced songs which came the closest to metal out of all the grunge bands. Alice in Chains seemed to bear the least resemblance to anything ever recorded and made use of haunting, unconventional harmonies, heavy, crunching riffs (guitar parts played

repeatedly), and metal techniques. Pearl Jam began with a Led Zeppelin-esque psychedelic classic rock sound and became increasingly experimental (they are the only remaining grunge band). One of grunge's unifying qualities was a return to authenticity after a decade of image- and pose-laden music. The grunge "look" registered precisely a lack of desire for a "look": jeans, t-shirts, sweaters, and everyday, casual clothing. The focus was on the music instead of an "image." Soon, though, mass culture labeled and packaged grunge with a look, a style, and an ideology, effectively making grunge musicians into what they had come to prominence for *not* being. Fashion magazines published grunge spreads, brand name stores "grunged up" their clothing, and plaid flannel became *haute couture*. This paradox destroyed grunge.

"Riot grrrl" music was similar and cotemporaneous to grunge, but was dominated by women and had a punk-ish feminist quality. Riot grrrls sneered at conventions of femininity and rejoiced in being "bitchy." Like grunge and punk, their music was harsh, distorted, simple, angry, and loud. Riot grrrl bands included L7, Hole, Bikini Kill, 7 Year Bitch, Fifth Column, and Babes in Toyland. The riot grrrl sound is not as prominent as it was in the early 1990s (Hole's 1998 LP release, "Celebrity Skin," was a slick pop departure), but it continues to exist. "Techno" is a very vague term with many meanings and connotations. It can designate a type of popular music driven entirely by computerized implements and written solely for dancing. This kind of music generally lacks authenticity, is often sold blatantly on sex appeal, and devotes little energy to creativity, originality, or innovation (which is not to say it is "bad"; I am not writing to praise any certain music or to denounce another);

it is simply music for dancing, usually in night clubs (which have, over the last two decades, become increasingly techno-oriented). This usage was common in the early 1990s and was anathema to rock enthusiasts in a period driven by an urge to be as "natural" as possible. But in the last few years it has come to designate a somewhat different scene and style of music. Today techno refers to a sub-genre of "rave" music, which lacks the sex-, lyric-, and persona-driven qualities of what is now referred to as "Euro dance" music. Rave music is "performed" by a dj who plays vinyl records on two turntables and who uses a mixer to combine the two records. The song-structure that Euro dance shared with rock and pop music is not present in today's rave music; today techno is an endless, seamless flow of very repetitive (virtually hypnotic) beats, samples (bits taken from other songs), loops, and tricks performed with the mixer and the equalizer. I will use the term "techno" most often to refer to the rave style of techno music, or to refer to elements within a certain music which were produced by computerized implements, generally (but not always) with an aim to enhance rhythmic qualities and "danceability."

The artists I intend to examine are the groups Korn, Deftones, Limp Bizkit, Marilyn Manson (which is the name of the band and of the frontman/singer), and the musician/performer Rob Zombie. Korn's first major release was a self-titled LP, released in 1994. It was followed by 1996's *Life is Peachy* and 1998's *Follow the Leader*. Korn is known for intensely personal, even disturbing lyrics about abuse and trauma as well as for fusing rhythmic hiphop dance qualities with the harsh, distorted, dissonance and the angry, angst-ridden vocal performance of metal. Limp Bizkit's sound is similar to Korn's on their first record entitled *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all*, released

in 1997, but on 1999's *Significant Other* the songs' styles become more varied, and rap and dance become central. Deftones also resemble Korn for their dissonant guitar sounds and emotionally upset vocals and lyrics, but they are less rhythm/dance oriented than Korn, possessing a more rock-oriented sound, and more vague, abstract, poetic lyrics.

Marilyn Manson is radically different from the aforementioned groups. They have been called a "shock rock" group and have devoted much energy to their visual imagery. Despite accusations of mimicking Alice Cooper, Marilyn Manson has a distinct musical style characterized by a bizarre, undead-like vocal sound, unsettling instrumentalization, and a fusion of techno and metal influences and other sources such as gospel, blues, and pop. Marilyn Manson is known for their radical imagery and costumes, from cross-dressing ghouls and androgynous mutants to space-age runway models and decaying angel-corpses, consistently violating gender conventions of dress. Their first release, *Portrait of an American Family* (1994) garnered them an underground, cult fanbase. Their second release, *Smells Like Children* (1995) obtained mainstream attention with their cover of the Eurythmics' 1980s hit "Sweet Dreams." *Antichrist Superstar* (1996) catapulted them into intense notoriety, possessing as it did obscene images of angels and plenty of lyrics attacking Christianity. *Mechanical Animals* (1998) alienated many of the fans the band had obtained with *Antichrist Superstar* because of its lack of sacrilegious elements. This record focuses on the sterilizing, dehumanizing effects of drug use and technology. Marilyn Manson's lyrics are consistently "over-the-top," and are met with a response divided between believing in the authenticity of the lyrics because of their countercultural quality and suspecting

that the band is guided not by authentic expression, but by a desire to make money and sell records through offending the public.

Rob Zombie was the driving force behind the hard rock/metal band White Zombie, and is now a solo artist. White Zombie's last three and most important releases are *La Sexorcisto: Devil Music Vol. 1* (1992), *Astro-Creep: 2000 - songs of love, devotion, and other synthetic delusions of the Electric Head* (1995), and *Supersexy Swingin' Sounds* (1996). *Astro-Creep: 2000* brought the band much success and popularity, and *Supersexy Swingin' Sounds* is a compilation of remixes of the songs from *Astro-Creep: 2000*. At this point, Rob Zombie's solo releases are *Hellbilly Deluxe* (1998) and *American Made Music to Strip By* (1998, a compilation of remixes of the songs from *Hellbilly Deluxe*). Rob Zombie's defining characteristic is recycling, recombining, and recontextualizing past pop-cultural imagery. The liner of *Hellbilly Deluxe* is filled with cartoon monsters, comic book excerpts, children's halloween costumes, bikini pin-ups, bones, skulls, ancient scientific diagrams, old comic book-style collage advertisements, and photos of Rob Zombie and his musicians in full zombie costumes. White Zombie's albums have the same imagery, but, as Rob Zombie did not have full creative control, the emphasis is more (but not fully) on sex and the female figure than on monsters. Rob Zombie and White Zombie have also used pseudo-Satanic imagery which appears to mock past popular associations of rock music with Satan. The lyrics are almost all imagistic poetry about monsters, creatures, human freaks, mutants, apocalypse, sex, and Satan.

In my analysis, I intend to use new metal to demonstrate that advertising and communication technology are affecting mass cultural expression in ways described

by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation*. In the realm of new metal, these effects are generally summarizable as a broad range of all-encompassing doubts about everything including oneself and doubt itself, resulting in unresolvable paradoxes in the belief systems and world views of the musicians and their audiences. I will focus on parody, satire, self-hatred, disintegration and abandoning of language, issues of confounded authenticity, recycling of cultural products, and aspects of rhythm and sound in new metal to develop and illustrate my argument.

My reasons for choosing this particular subject are several. I am aware of no work written about new metal, and, while much has been written about other types of popular music, such as punk, "world music" (from outside of North America), hiphop, rap, folk, and nightclub music, there exists very little work about heavy metal in general. Histories of rock music tend to neglect heavy metal. In their book entitled *The Role of Rock*, Don J. Hibbard and Carol Kaleialoha, for instance, limit their discussion of metal to two brief paragraphs. Also, while Hibbard has taught university courses on rock, he is a historian of architecture, and Kaleialoha is involved in industrial sociology and psychology. Most of the extant material on metal and/or rock is written from a sociological or cultural studies point of view and devotes more attention to the fans and the "scene" than to the material itself. Examples of this include Peter Wicke's *Rock Music: Culture, aesthetics, and sociology*, David P. Szatmary's *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock-and-Roll*, and *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, edited by Martin Stokes. One of the most comprehensive books written about the subject of heavy metal is Jeffrey Jansen Arnett's *Metalheads*. Arnett closely examines the heavy metal subculture and its members from a

sociological/anthropological perspective through interviews, content analysis, and some field research. Unfortunately, his book is written with the aim of proving that heavy metal has been a factor in the decay of the lives of American teenagers. An excellent print source of information about heavy metal is Martin Popoff's *Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal*, but this book is more descriptive than analytical in nature.

Current, contemporary, and popular cultural forms have generally received less attention than older, more established material. It is my aim to contribute to the study of one particular form of popular expression and to generate further intellectual debates. I will approach the subject matter from a literary perspective, focussing on the music, lyrics, and imagery, rather than the lifestyles, subcultures, and behaviour of the artists and their audience. I will compile no statistics and will perform no content analysis-style research such as Arnett's counting of how many different works use certain words or allude to Satan. Instead, I will conduct a qualitative analysis of the works and the artists. I will consider what cultural conditions the material is reflecting and examine them in light of Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*. Any departure from this approach will remain closer to the perspectives of cultural studies than those of sociology, psychology, or anthropology in that my focus will remain on the works and their "authors" (i.e., the speakers) rather than on the fans or the new metal scene and environment (i.e., the receivers).

In my first chapter, I will begin by comparing new metal to the rock and roll music of 1950s U.S.A. By using Hibbard and Kaleialoha's *The Role of Rock* to simultaneously compare the qualities of the two styles of music and the cultural conditions surrounding them, I hope to achieve an understanding regarding the reasons

for which music such as new metal is being created, and what this music is saying about our society and culture.

The second chapter will consider new metal in the context of elements of contemporary postmodernist and feminist theory. I will discuss the conclusions regarding recent popular rock music drawn by Neil Nehring in his *Popular Music, Gender, and Postmodernism* and by Simon Reynolds and Joy Press in their *The Sex Revolts*. I will proceed to examine new metal in light of these analyses, highlighting certain elements of new metal such as anger, abjection, language, the body, rationality, and sex. I will conclude this chapter with a brief examination of some salient features of the primary materials. The third and final chapter will consist of a brief examination of the primary material itself, focussing on the lyrics, imagery, and musical qualities of new metal.

Chapter I

Ferrous Roots: New Metal and 1950s Rock and Roll

Most past scholars in the fields of sociology and musicology have, in their writing on rock music, neglected the textual nature of the music. These scholars are divided in their conception of rock's role in the lives of its listeners. Some, like Jeffrey Jansen Arnett, treat the listeners as fanatical devotees who build their lives and personal environments around and with the stuff of rock, as if it were the sole source of meaning for them, like a type of cult. Others, like Peter Wicke, treat rock like a "scene," or a series of scenes, which provides the basis for social events and interactions, and which is part of a general atmosphere. Both of these approaches are fertile ground for volumes of scholarship. Nonetheless, there is another dimension which has not been addressed: the "literary" function of music. By approaching rock music as text and cultural product, instead of as a lifestyle, activity, or behaviour, rock music scholarship can achieve new understandings of its subject matter. One function of popular music is that which literature used to play, and which film plays today. That function is analogous to a social barometer of sorts. Popular music depicts things that are relevant to its own period and setting. Like great literature, popular rock music paints pictures of its environment. Painting and literature are both the subjects of disciplines which examine them seriously and critically. The scholars who come closest to accomplishing this task in popular rock music are rock historians. They examine the meaning of rock texts and their connection to their society, considering the listeners to the extent that they are the source of the reflected image that is the rock

music text. But rock historians work for the most part diachronically, and thus do not achieve the depth of examination found in many literary studies.

Still, no cultural phenomena can be completely understood without examining it in a historical context. Of course, new metal is not purely "new." It has very distinct affinities with past forms of popular music. It has tangible roots in earlier musical styles and texts. Being what Korn's vocalist, Jonathan Davis, calls "pretty heavy music," (DiMartino http://www.launch.com) new metal has roots in early heavy metal music which also dealt with themes such as psychological fragmentation and loss of identity. But new metal is *not* heavy metal, which is why it requires a different descriptor. Jonathan Davis, Korn's singer, has stated in an interview, "I don't like being labeled a metal band. We all hate it. But we're lumped in that category because we're heavy and we could only get tours like Ozzy, Danzig" (DiMartino http://www.launch.com). In another interview he points out: "..they've always called us heavy metal and it fuckin' pisses me off because that's just fucked up. They put us in that category, but I don't know what to call it. No one has come up with a really good fuckin' name to call this... there's been emo-core, heavy-hop, post-metal and nü metal. None of those really ring a bell" (http://www.korn.com). New metal's inventive quality causes it to elude definition according to previously established labels. For that reason it has a purity about it reminiscent of another radically inventive era in popular music history: the 1950s. Rock and roll music was born in the 1950s because of a climax in capitalist social control. The similarities between the birth of rock and roll and the birth of new metal are many and equal in number to the contrasts. The play

between these similarities and contrasts is what, historically, sheds the most light on the "raison d'être" and meaning of new metal.

As rock historians Don Hibbard and Carol Kaleialoha write in their book entitled *The Role of Rock*, "Rock, like they [the generation that grew up with it], was a product of, and a reaction to, a prosperous, urban, beaurocratic/computerized corporate state, whose heritage stressed, 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'" (1). The same is true of new metal. There are some social similarities between the 1950s and the 1990s, although I will not be analyzing these in depth. The 1950s were filled with promise resulting from material affluence, immediately following several decades of war. Yet that time was extremely repressive; the expectation of rampant, unrestrained capitalism to provide happiness and fulfillment was so intense that it almost functioned like hooks pulling the corners of the mouths of North Americans into tight, forced, delirious smiles. Of course everyone should have been happy, it seemed, for everyone had access to nice cars, houses, clothes, appliances, and other unnecessarily luxurious commodities. Advertising became bold, creating a very tangible atmosphere with a single, unified, unqualified message: consume. This absolute imperative to travel the road of freedom to happiness became oppressive in its singularity. This is the same state of affairs as in the 1990s in North America. Following the Cold War the spread of clean and luxurious technology, epitomized in the household commonness of personal computers and the internet, has once again made the state of the world appear free of the large scale worries and problems of the past. The radical surge forward in communications technology has caused the same univocal message to abound more cohesively than ever before. Communications

technology has even tamed and appropriated war elsewhere in the world, and the capitalist discourse now uses communications technology to its own advantage, pointing to the unhappy consequences for countries who have not subscribed to the idea of "absolute freedom". Brand name fever is at a high; popular music sings about material commodity and *is* material commodity. Everything, it seems, is about the free market system. We must be happy; to be happy we must be proper and fit in; to fit in we must buy expensive things. But, as Doestoevsky has observed, happiness always comes at the expense of freedom—"Dostoevsky does not believe that humanity can achieve freedom and happiness at the same time," (Wellek and Lawall 2367)—and yet when one realizes that one is not free, one starts to become unhappy. In both decades happy propriety became religion. But, inevitably, more and more critically aware people began to keenly feel that, while they were maximally affluent, there was no way for them *not* to be happy. In other words, doors were being closed to them. No matter that those who might want to keep these doors open were considered perverse and antisocial; what mattered is that people were being robbed of the freedom to *choose* whether to be happy or not. Human beings will bite off their own tongues to assert their right to choose to do so, and the bottom line has been proven once again to be freedom. The pop hits which rock and roll displaced were nice, smooth, controlled, and obedient. The music was consonant and clean, the lyrics were safe and acceptable. These qualities are not inherently bad, wrong, or suspicious, but they came to be decreasingly reflective of the reality of the lives of North American youth and increasingly representative of the oppressive social order which was forcing youth to be dishonest with itself.

It is thus that 1950s rock and new metal rose as loud, frantic, distorted voices to shake loose this propriety-obsession/oppression. Although they are very real, I will not delve too deeply into the musical similarities between 1950s rock and roll and new metal. Both are loud, guitar-driven, rhythmic, intended for dancing, relatively simple (compared to other rock movements and other forms of popular music), distorted, intense, and simultaneously happy and unhappy. The important difference is the simple and obvious fact that from a 1990s perspective, this has already been done. Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis could boogie their worries away, thumbing their noses at propriety and capitalist control by chaotically letting loose bodily energy. But, as with all musical counter-movements, this nose-thumbing, raucous guitar- and piano-playing, and kick-your-feet-up dancing ceased to function as a resistance strategy when capitalism incorporated the idea in the form of Chuck, Jerry, and Elvis copy acts which were more bland, tame, sober, and safe. New metal is letting loose the same bodily energy, but without the faith in the meaning, consequences, and future of the action. New metal's generation, while perhaps being unfamiliar with 1950s rock and rock social history, has a feeling of knowing that this has been done before and obviously did not bring about any permanent change. In the face of glossy, saccharine, formulaic, carbon-copied pop hits and of oppressive hyper-capitalist urges towards mind control, new metal is screaming unintelligibly and dancing away the energy the listeners and musicians have built up against the constraint of consumer-propriety, all the while knowing that this is likely leading nowhere and that their message is already a part of the capitalist system. This results in a paradoxical act of rebellion executed in the knowledge that the act will not ultimately lead to any place outside of the

repressive system targeted and that it is already within the set of codes set out by the system. Consequently, this paradoxical act of rebellion is very frustrated.

Hibbard and Kaleialoha write that 1950s rock and roll "music defied the traditional middle-class standards of taste, and was associated with anti-social values, and with time it came to embody a way of confronting the 'system' on a day-to-day basis" (1). The first two of these points are true of new metal, but the third is not. Whereas early rock "beckoned to those floundering on the stagnant sea of middle-class complacency," (4) new metal now itself flounders. After several phases of evolution, rock became

> an accepted part of American civilization, as much in tune with daily life as Barbie dolls, Budweisers, Ban Roll-On, and Big Macs. Assimilated into the ebb and flow of middle-class society, stripped of its antagonist role, rock has evolved into a respectable, albeit superficial, element within the larger matrix that is America. Divested of any social meaning, it is now an end in itself..." (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 5)

This insight is integral to an understanding of new metal, which is, in fact, a battleground on which the conflict is playing itself out between an adherence to and a loss of the faith in rock's power to provide relief from a repressive hegemony. New metal artists continue to believe that music can have some kind of power or effect, even if they are unsure what that effect is, yet they are also unable to happily turn a blind eye to the fact that the promises of satisfaction, happiness, and contentment of this late-capitalist democracy have not been fulfilled. They crave honesty, sincerity, and authenticity in a society which has all but forgotten what those concepts are, and

thus make music which is driven by this contradiction. Bought and sold in the virtual marketplace of cultural commodity, bands like Korn want to drive up record sales—Korn guitarist, James "Munky" Shaffer, speaking about Korn's third album, has said in an interview, "Of course we wanna sell as many albums or more than the first two. I think that would be one of the band's goals," (http://www.korn.com) and Korn vocalist Jonathan Davis told Dave DiMartino that "Money will always be a priority," (DiMartino http://www.launch.com)—and yet, in the words of Jonathan Davis, they also "just want to be remembered as a band that brought back rock and roll" (Pecorelli http://www.calendarlive.com). Indeed, the rhetoric used by the members of Korn is blatantly reminiscent of rock and roll at its conception; Jonathan Davis says "I think that Korn is contributing to [the current state of music] by creating a new style of music bringing heavy music back, putting the 'rock' back in 'rock and roll'" (http://www.korn.com).

Rock and roll has been characterized as a combination of European ballad with irregular Afro-American rhythm. This has never been as true of North American chart-topping popular music as it is with new metal, especially Korn and Limp Bizkit. Jonathan Davis states that "In Paris, they call us 'fusion.' That's kind of cool" (DiMartino http://www.launch.com). Without getting too involved in an analysis of the "fusion" nature of new metal, it is necessary to point out the Afro-European blend which characterizes much new metal in order to highlight this similarity between new metal and early rock and roll. These two popular music "movements" are not the only ones which have involved such a fusion. Disco, funk, and rap are also all characterized

by this quality, but early rock and roll and new metal are the two movements of such a "fused" nature which best bring together social rebellion and radical popularity.

New metal leans more towards African-American influence than has past popular music, although I will focus here on the dance-orientation of new metal. Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, and the other originators of rock and roll created a very unique atmosphere and mood. Their music was hard, heavy, frenetic, and chaotic, but it was also structured and was meant for dancing and having fun. This special, specific approach has not been reproduced until now. All music meant for dancing has been on the lighter side of the popular music spectrum—even guitar music like funk, disco, and psychedelic, the latter being favoured for a less rhythmic and more abstract sort of dance which is now often mocked by young people—and hard, heavy popular music has never been geared towards smiling, laughing, and bouncing. 1950s rock and roll shares this very special intent with new metal. Heavy metal has varied across the spectrum from scowling and stomping one foot to laughing and cheering, but has never been designed to, as Jonathan Davis sings, "get your boogie on." On the other side of the same coin, music which has been written for dance has never since had the visceral, loud, aggressive, frenetic, distorted qualities of early rock and roll. This combination seems to be naturally linked to a need to shake off the bonds of enforced happiness. Fighting an insidious social phenomenon that is at once happy and unhappy, the musics of these two periods have internalized that very contradiction. One important difference between the two periods is the structure of the music. Indeed, early rock and roll blatantly defied the songwriting structure of the current pop tunes. Much of the music's structure was taken from blues music, which has always

been rhythmic, but not always dance-oriented. This entails (not that it is tangibly important to this study), among other things, twelve-bar progressions which most often used I-IV-V chords. But, whereas rock and pop used the same system differently, some new metal discards the system entirely, having no solos or established rules of phrasing, chording, or beat structure. Describing Korn's music, Jonathan Davis says "I think it just creates a cool musical cocktail or whatever you want to call it. Yeah, it's putting chaos into music. Because all the sounds are all dissonant and just fucked up. It's not really all in key. It all melts together into something that's got melody" (http://www.korn.com). Asked for advice for aspiring musicians, Korn guitarist Brian "Head" Welch replied "...play from your heart and there are no rules. ... We do some stuff out of key that totally works and people would tell me it's not right. Works fine for me" (http://www.korn.com).

In contrast to early rock and roll, much new metal combines a very "white" European metal guitar sound with not only hip hop rhythms, but with a hip hop approach and philosophy—Korn's bassist, Reg "Fieldy" Arvizu, says "I don't even listen to anything heavy at all. I don't even own a CD that has a guitar in it" (DiMartino http://www.launch.com). The result is beat-driven, rhythm-oriented music for dancing. While metal has never before even given credit to the idea of dancing, the origins of rock are in dance music. Even new metal bands that are not outside the classical notation system or informed by a hip hop philosophy are dance-driven. Rob Zombie and Marilyn Manson have both released very dance-oriented songs and use "techno" components—which include beat-boxes, programming, synthesizers, and sampling—to enhance danceability. Korn, Limp Bizkit, Rob Zombie, Marilyn

Manson, and Nine Inch Nails are all played in dance clubs on the same night as house music, '80s pop, '70s funk and disco, and '90s ska-punk. Indeed, "Rock 'n' roll drew heavily upon the rhythm and blues for its substance" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 8).

At this point it is worthwhile to quote a magazine writer, writing near the end of early rock and roll's period of purity and power (before corporate capitalist interests neutered the music). In 1964, Jeremy Larner wrote the following in an article entitled "What do they get from Rock 'n' Roll?":

> ...though the lyrics portray the familiar broken heart who cannot go on living without his True Love, the bouncing rhythm of the song conveys another emotion altogether; the desire to thump straight on through all heartbreaks and difficulties. This ostensible lament is really steering-wheel pounding music. The crybaby lyrics are countered by pure psychopathy, nor is there any resolution of these conflicting feelings. The image presented is that of an extremely tender individual ready to strike out or give up if his dreams don't come true. The protest against the clichés of American adulthood is carried by the music rather than the words, so that the teen-ager can pay lip service to the feelings from which the music proclaims his alienation. It is as if his mind did not know what his body was doing. At the same time he expresses his distress with the conventional life and sex attitudes, he prepares to make his peace with them. (46)

This description is uncannily appropriate for new metal. New metal is now thumping straight on through emptiness, falsity, self-doubt, uncertainty, and a general void of meaning in the world; thumping for the sake of doing *something*, creating something

to hold onto, speaking to create a constant reminder that the speaker still exists. The psychopathy is even purer in new metal, as will be demonstrated later—a content analysis would reveal a very high rate of occurrence of the word "psycho" in the lyrics of Deftones and Limp Bizkit, as well as other more explicit descriptions of psychoses in the lyrics of Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails, and the music of Korn, Limp Bizkit, Marilyn Manson, Nine Inch Nails, Deftones, and Rob Zombie all engage in some form of disconcerting fragmented fraying. Some of the vocalists are more "tender" than others, for example Jonathan Davis and Deftones' Chino Moreno. Where they differ from 1950s rock and roll is that they all know that dreams do not come true, and, in this society, dreams are all that is left for youth to adhere to, so the death of dreams is the death of meta-structure, of grand narrative, of God, so to speak, and thus the world is left without an organizing principle. The clichés of American adulthood which surround new metal are not chastity and heartbreak, but are rather capitalist prosperity and hyper-celebrity, and lip service is not paid through the lyrics, but through literal engagement with those clichés by the musicians. New metal records are selling extremely well, and all of the artists have very large fan bases. Disillusionment has already been "done" by grunge and appropriated as another false, fashionable money-making scheme by hypermarket industries like fashion, Hollywood film, and music. New metal musicians thus have no faith in the grunge route, which so obviously failed. Since popular music is now what Jonathan Davis calls a "fickle fuckin' industry" (http://www.latimes.com), new metal is cynical, lost, confused, and consequently enraged, sarcastic, or purely escapist. Still, the dichotomy described by Larner is not only present, but has been intensified to a soul-rending degree. A

quotation from an interview between Teri VanHorn of *L.A. Times* and Jonathan Davis and Reg "Fieldy" Arvizu sums up the comparison with Larner's scenario:

> "You don't sit down and get depressed when you listen to Korn," agrees Fieldy. "You wanna get up and bob your head."
>
> "Well, those guys' grooves are energy and up," says Davis of his rhythm section. "And what I'm singing about is fuckin' depressing. It's a perfect mixture, like yin and yang. All uppity phat grooves, and the depressing stuff that balances it out." (Van Horn http://www.latimes.com)

In the wake of grunge's death, new metal, consciously or not, has reached back to the source of rock and roll to retrieve its very basic rebellious element, and it has heightened that element to a new intensity. And yet new metal is possessed by an anxiety unknown to 1950s rock and roll: that the rebellious popular culture products being created today have been tried already and have not worked. The point here is that reflecting on the conditions which caused the birth of rock music can shed light on the bizarre, frenetic, "panic-stricken" (in the words of Jean Baudrillard), schizoid nature of new metal music, and the reason for its current popularity. As the cliché goes, "history repeats itself."

In the 1950s, "American teenagers were growing up in a rapidly changing society. America's value system, especially its attitudes toward love and sex, was visibly in transition. Old words remained in vogue, although certain people recognized these to be inoperative, and even restrictive, approaches to life" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 19). Rock history descriptions of the 1950s paint a picture which is strikingly similar to the present situation and to new metal. Right now North American

society is undergoing transition the rate of which is unprecedented. Despite the early rock and roll of the 1950s, the hippie movement of the 1960s, and the grunge attitude of the early 1990s, materialism continues to be the strongest, most ubiquitous, and most insidious driving force in society. Despite their broad range of potential uses, communications technologies are used almost exclusively for entertainment and profit. New metal artists are surrounded and permeated by a consistent atmosphere of profit-seeking which homogenizes cultural products into the most widely saleable objects possible, but they feel an inner need for individuality, for self-fulfillment, and for self-expression. Just as early rock and roll was responding to the presence of a dichotomy between restrictive social codes and the increasing autonomy of young people, new metal is the fruit of an unresolvable tension in the lives of young people between the cultural validation of material success/excess and their own praise of independent thought and self-expression. Despite the frenetic pace of change in today's culture, Jonathan Davis sings "Nothing changes, just rearranges." A frightening level of disillusionment, discouragement, and loss of innocence is apparent in new metal lyrics (from Korn's "Children of the Korn": "Generation triple-x," "All I wanna do is live!"). Chuck Berry's invocation in his song, "School Days," now sounds glib: "Hail, hail rock 'n' roll, deliver me from days of old." The music and image today's rockers reflect suggests that no matter how pristine, pure, innocent, and good a style of music is when it is created, it will not bring about any permanent change in the lives, freedom, and authority structures of mass culture, as it is inevitably captured, retooled, and deflated by capitalism.

North American youth is undergoing a loss of innocence similar to the loss experienced by the youth of 1950s North America, for "[t]he [American] teenager of the 1950s dated and went steady at a younger age than any generation in recent history up to that time, and was too aware, experienced and optimistic to believe in the eternal broken heart" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 18). I have seen a twelve-year-old singer/songwriter/guitarist on a local open stage singing (I paraphrase closely, as I did not have a notepad with me) "Sitting on my ass, bored, waiting for the pizza / Watching my movie on my big screen T.V." In the 1950s rock and roll voiced a desire for movement, activity, and kinetic release; now new metal is giving a less optimistic voice to a sense of futility, boredom, and disillusionment. Material affluence does not appear to have fulfilled the 1950s teen generation, and today's new metal shows no faith in the virtue of acquisitiveness, nor in becoming debilitated by grunge's innocent, morose, depressive anger and resentment. Both new metal and 1950s rock and roll styles were/are an explosion of kinetic energy, and the distorted, raucous, driven guitar lines of Chuck Berry and Korn are accompanied by lyrics such as "The beat of the drum is loud and bold" and "Get your boogie on ... Come dance with me." The difference is that today's rock appears to reflect a sentiment that no matter what the music says or drives people to do, the world is a corrupt place that requires images to be bought and sold, principles to be compromised, and lines to be walked. Thus Jonathan Davis sings "You want me to be something I could never be" and Marilyn Manson sings "Rock is deader than dead, shock is all in your head, your sex and your drugs is all that we're fed, so fuck all your protests and put them to bed." It is apparent here that the loss of innocence expressed by the music of today's youth, while perhaps

similar in nature to that of youth's music in the 1950s, is enormously different in degree. The songs of 1950s rock "envelop the listener in a world of cars, school, adolescence, and rock 'n' roll" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 15); this sort of happy atmosphere is the opposite of the torment-filled environment depicted by Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Deftones. This (among other things such as *negative* self-reflexivity, excess shock value, sarcasm, crying, violent imagery, rampant profanity, confusion, and lack of faith) shows the massive loss of innocence which characterizes new metal, the intensity of which sets it apart from its early rock counterpart. While "[t]he sense of freedom, of total unrestraint and physical expression, lay at the core of rock 'n' roll" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 16), in the 1950s, what drives new metal today is the *desire* for freedom, lack of restraint, and physical expression. New metal's expression of urges for freedom comes to prominence, as is evident from a historical perspective, in times when individual social and semantic freedom is felt to be in short supply.

Marilyn Manson represents absolute freedom to do what one wants to do, regardless of how others may respond; excessively cerebral at the same time as being excessively visceral, corporeal, and abject, Marilyn Manson embodies doubt, questioning, and critical thought. They force deep-rooted inquiries into the legitimacy of current sources of authority such as "nature," religion, patriarchy, media, and gender. Thus they suggest that today's individuals do not realize the extent of their inherent freedom. Not only are we free to be atheist and to refuse popular trends of fashion and music, but we are also free to ignore nature's authority over our bodies. Thus Marilyn Manson's imagery is a hyper-extension of the "total unrestraint and physical expression" of early rock and roll, consisting, on "Smells like Children," of

hideous make-up and cross-dressing to which was added, with "Antichrist Superstar," undead imagery of death, disease, and decay (undeath has been for ages an ultimate mythical symbol of violation of the laws of nature, and has now been injected back into popular culture), and which moved to, in "Mechanical Animals," futuristic, space-age costumes depicting mutation and bodies which are simultaneously female and male. The freedom Marilyn Manson expresses in their imagery and music is the most political of the new metal bands I am analyzing.

Like Marilyn Manson, Rob Zombie devotes a lot of energy to elaborate sets, costumes, props, and visual aspects in his live performances. But Rob Zombie revels in a similar yet less political freedom to create actual, physical worlds onstage to the extent that he makes almost no money from his shows due to his expensive stages. This freedom is related inextricably to "authenticity" (recall my definition in the introduction), as can be seen in this excerpt of an interview between Rob Zombie and CDNOW's Greg Kot:

> CDNOW: Your stage is amazingly elaborate (a futuristic castle infested with drum-playing druids, video screens, go-go dancers). It's like Dungeons and Dragons come to life. What kind of a sick mind would make something like that?
>
> ROB ZOMBIE: [Laughs] I designed it and then had a lot of my friends, special effects guys who are in movies, build it. The latest addition is an 18-foot robot that just towers over everything. It's absurd. The whole set cost about $200,000 to build.
>
> CDNOW: Can you break even on a tour with those kinds of expenses?

ROB ZMOBIE: I don't know. That's what I'm hoping for. But it's very likely not to break even.

CDNOW: So why do it?

ROB ZOMBIE: It's a weird thing. I started with this idea I had as a kid, to do this giant crazy show. And when I finally got to the level where I finally could do it ... you really almost can't do it. But I have to! I won't make the money, but this is always the thing I wanted to do. (Kot http://www.cdnow.com)

While it is different from rock and roll's simpler desire for autonomy and control over one's own body and personal choices, Rob Zombie's freedom is the freedom to re-create one's entire world. While elaborate sets and costumes are not new to rock and roll, Rob Zombie's almost cinematographic focus causes his work to hover between pop/rock/dance music and "what are essentially imaginary soundtracks for a sci-fi slasher movie" (Kot http://www.cdnow.com). Indeed, "Zombie prowls a skull-infested stage like a postmodern Fagin in top hat, flying braids, tattered threads and Big Foot snow boots" (Kot http://www.cdnow.com). He exceeds even Marilyn Manson in his insistence on freeing himself and his audience from the bonds of the real world.

Limp Bizkit represent a very different quality of freedom: generic freedom to sample from a range of musical styles. As vocalist Fred Durst says of the band's varied musical sources: "Everybody likes different music. Some shit we like's the same. Sam's a grunge kid, Wes is a metal, industrial kid, Lethal's a hip-hop kid, I'm a hard-core, hip-hop, 80's pop, Glam-rock, fuckin kid, John's a fuckin' little metal, grunge, jazz kid" (Wurm http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Towers/6239/Bizkit.html). Ed Condran adds that

> [Guitarist Wes] Borland, who, along with Scott, hails from Nashville, is an enthusiastic fan of everything, from industrial (Ministry) and glam (Bowie) to death metal (Carcass, and Testament). DJ Lethal, formerly the turntable man for [rap group] House of Pain, was weaned on hip hop and classic rock and his father is a guitarist with a wide record collection. [Bassist Sam] Rivers was very keen on grunge and metal. And of course, Grandmaster Durst's range of influences include Kiss, hard-core, rap and modern rock. (Condran http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Boulevard/4569/lbau.html)

After the demise of 1990s grunge music, happiness became almost an obligation for anyone engaged in popular music in what seemed like a compulsive desire to rinse popular music of the chaotic emotional and musical detritus of grunge, to sterilize it beyond any capacity for fertility, and to polish it to a blinding shine. It was as if popular music's populace has awoken from a bad dream and needed to free itself of any reminder of the previous night's perverse misery. Just like the music which was popular before and after the rock and roll revolution of the 1950s, this monovocal, obsessively happy state did not last long before the suspicious unrest which caused 1950s rock and roll, 1960s folk music, 1970s classic rock, and grunge music set in and fertilized the ground of popular music to grow new metal. Limp Bizkit revels in the now familiar blending of influences in order to transcend the straitjacket of familiar, happy, everything's-fine pop music. To highlight this facet of Limp Bizkit's music, it is worthwhile to quote the first hidden track from their second album, *Significant Other*. The track is an angry, lucid, eloquent spoken-word rant by the unidentified "bald man" (named Matt Pinfield in the album liner notes), over ambient background music:

> Hey, it's the bald man, and I'm here to tell you why the new Limp Bizkit album is so important. That's because cds like this one spare you from all the chart-topping, teeny-bopping, disposable happy horseshit that brings up the bile from the back of my neck. I have no time or tolerance for those shitty, whack acts like that. I wouldn't piss on their cds to put out a fire. And I'm tired of those lame-ass, tame-ass, pre-fabricated, sorry excuses for singers and musicians who don't even write their own songs. What the world needs now is a musical revolution. We need some rock, we need something that has balls! We need something with substance, depth, something with soul, some edge, some passion, some power. Shit, if it's gonna be mellow, fuck, man, it better have something, it better mean something. I'll tell you, you gotta hit 'em with something hard, you gotta stick 'em with something limp, like Limp Bizkit. I'm so fuckin' tired of the shit that I'm hearing on the radio. Radio sucks! The same fuckin' songs over and over again. All the weak ones, all the disposable crap that isn't gonna matter in three months. It's just shit! It's crap, Fred! Fred, I'm telling you, there's so much shit going on and we need some new music!

This earnest monologue shows how seriously new metal artists feel the need for authenticity and freedom which I have been outlining and which were felt perhaps slightly less consciously in the 1950s.

Korn pursue the liberation of the body's kinetic energy which according Hibbard and Kaleialoha is typical of 1950s rock and roll. Especially with their third record, to experience Korn is to dance, move, and feel the corporeal quality of the music. The music is made to feel like the body's rhythms, and there are many points in

the songs where the structure is reduced to very simple, slow, rhythmic repetitions, like an overwhelming drone. This represents a "victory" of the body over the mind, a refuting of the Cartesian rational-primacy which has led the members of Korn and their fans into the discursive darkness they feel currently. New metal music expresses a frustration with and a desire to escape from the sexual repression, the fashion limitation, and the tangled, inescapable web of meaningless images and ideas brought about by "the form of advertising ... in which all particular contents are annulled at the very moment when they can be transcribed into each other" (Baudrillard 87). New metal seems permeated by the idea that "[a]dvertising, [is] like information: destroyer of intensities, accelerator of inertia" (Baudrillard 92), and now the thing least likely to let them down is their own emotion and experience. All the new metal musicians I am examining question the reliability of "reality," and Korn reacts to that paranoid, ubiquitous doubt by investing in corporeality, emotion, movement, and feeling. Like drugs, Korn's music, at certain peak points, feels like it "switches off" the mind, drowning it in waves of sound which feel almost "fleshy" in the way that they elicit response from the body (examples include "B.B.K.," "My Gift to You," "Dead Bodies Everywhere," "A.D.I.D.A.S.," "Ass Itch," "Kill You," and "Freak on a Leash"). Literally, at these points almost all nuance and complexity drops away, taking with them rational thought and action, until all that is left is a rhythm and a loud, insistent, pulsing drone. This is also true of Jonathan Davis' vocals, like in the song "Twist," in which Jonathan Davis comments on the state of utterance and authority today. The sixty-second song consists of frantic, psychotic, feral[1], gibberish including whining,

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[1] In my thesis, I will use this term only to mean "savage", "wild", and "untamed", ignoring its
Footnote is continued on the next page.

groaning, and breathing, interrupted by abrupt breaks in which he simply says "twist... twist," indicating that no matter what he says, one authority or another will "twist" his words until they're unrecognizable gibberish, so the only way to retain one's self-mastery today is to utter gibberish at the outset. Corporeal and semantic freedom takes a different form on "Seed," where Davis' fleshy "tonguespeak" is modulated even further to transcend its own voice and language by being "scratched" on a turntable, or at least sounding that way. Here his own vocal production is made even more psychotic by this hysterical modulation. This part of the song resembles the fusion of racial-cultural practices which informed the rock and roll of the 1950s: Davis' patented babble is reminiscent of jazz music's scat, but has been remade into a very hard metal-ish style, and is now being fused with record-scratching, which was originated by African-Americans and which later became popular with white djs. The point is that while the physical freedom celebrated by 1950s rock and roll was a direct rebellion against a physically and socially repressive society, the physical freedom evoked by Korn's music is only a futile *attempt*, or even a *wish*, to rebel against such repression. Repressive social codes took a blow in the '60s with the popular sexual and physical liberation of that period, but they defused that threat by appropriating, incorporating, and castrating the processes used to achieve physical freedom. Finally sexual and physical repression was reinstated. Thus the avenue of rock's physically unleashing quality is no longer available as a method of refuting the repressive order's dominance over our bodies. No matter how hard we dance (and Korn dances hard), new metal musicians appear to know that we will still be surrounded by the need to cover our

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connotations of "fatal" or "funereal".

bodies, and to cover them with the right brand-name clothing. We cannot, it seems, shake off the obligation to once again make love behind closed doors, to touch ourselves only when we are alone, to go alone to web pornography sites as the only place for bodies which do not fit strict advertising standards. The excessive, demanding quality of Korn's physical emphasis results from the knowledge—and feeling—of its ineffectualness, of being sucked into a meaningless, motionless void. Now Jonathan Davis sings "So come dance with me" not because dancing represents freedom, but because there is nothing else visible to try as an assertion of freedom. There is no freedom, but new metal appears to insist that we stay alive and active, even if the action cannot find a coherent direction.

Another facet of new metal which reflects issues faced by previous popular music counter-movements is sexuality. In the late 1950s and early 1960s,

> a number of 'cutesie' songs, such as the Royal Teens' 'Short Shorts' (1958), the Playmates' 'What is Love' (1959), and 'Little Miss Stuck Up' (1961), and Brian Hyland's 'Itsy, Bitsy Teensie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini' (1960) ... carried rather positive sexual messages in their simple lyrics. These songs emphasized the wearing of abbreviated and tight attire, swaying with a wiggle when one walked, and advocated more sexually open behaviour for teenage girls. (Who wore short shorts? They wore short shorts!)" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 19).

Also, the music of the late 1960s and the early 1970s was an integral part of the American sexual revolution. As America still possessed a modicum of innocence, "[t]o hear Jim Morrison sing 'Come on baby, light my fire' on AM radio indicated to

certain people that America was loosening up. The glorification of sex in song, and its acceptance by AM radio served as an indication of America's amenability to change. Another taboo had been removed, another barrier destroyed, and people felt a little freer" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 72). The sexual liberation of the late 1960s was pure and innocent in its honesty and sincerity, and thus considered a victory for freedom. Just as "[t]he sound of teenage defiance, absorbed and remodeled by the spirit of American pluralism, became safe teenage entertainment" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 23), liberal sexuality became tamed and coopted. Now after the spread of sexual liberation, sexuality is no longer liberal; for the new metal generation—as Jean Baudrillard writes about commodity—"there is only its obscene and empty form" (Baudrillard 93). Images of sexuality are widespread in the media, but, paradoxically, sexual lifestyles and popular social codes are very conservative. New metal expresses a bitter, jaded nostalgia regarding sexuality, at the same time ironically reveling in an empty promiscuity and cursing a lost innocence. The chorus of Korn's "A.D.I.D.A.S." is "All day I dream about sex / All day I dream about fucking," and, in the verse, Jonathan Davis sings "I don't know your fucking name, so what, let's fuck." In "Children of the Korn," guest rapper Ice Cube says "Generation triple x / We're all about the weed smoke and kinky sex." The lyrics of Korn's "Faget" express Jonathan Davis' anger, rage, and sadness at being called the song's title; he sings "All my life / who am I?" and "I'm just a faget! / You can suck my dick and fucking like it!" Marilyn Manson sings, in "User Friendly," "I'm not in love but I'm gonna fuck you / till someone better comes along." The liners of White Zombie's "Supersexy Swingin' Sounds" and Rob Zombie's "Hellbilly Deluxe" have 1960's style pinup photos of nude

and bikini-clad women. All of these features suggest simultaneously a nostalgia for a lost innocence and a sarcastic anger at the meaninglessness of sex. There are also some bizarre, deviant aspects to the approach to sexuality taken by some new metal artists. Jonathan Davis calls "My Gift to You" a "sick love song"; the lyrics are about asphyxiating his lover as they make love. The imagery in Marilyn Manson's liners, which I discussed earlier, features some evidently deviant aspects, such as coprophagia and androgyny. In the liner of White Zombie's album entitled "Astro-creep 2000," Rob Zombie drew bizarre cartoons of nude, sexually available women with strange, clownish lovers. These aspects could suggest a desire to shock and to draw attention to the emptiness of sexual imagery in the media, or a desire to occupy terrain of sexual imagery previously unused and to do something that hasn't been done, or an indifference to current social sexual codes caused by dissatisfaction with their emptiness and restrictiveness. In any case, new metal artists reflect strange, schizophrenic, contradictory, nonchalant yet frightened attitudes towards personal and public sexuality which support Jean Baudrillard's statement that "the balance of terror is never anything but the spectacular slope of a system of deterrence that has insinuated itself from the *inside* into all the cracks of daily life" (Baudrillard 32).

Despite their countercultural qualities, rock and metal have crossed through the state of "fully developed counterculture" into full-blown hegemony. Thanks to mass media, "Americans began to become aware of a fully developed counterculture in their midst," and that "the young were reshaping and redefining their world, and the primary evidence of such a change was the presence of rock music with its socially relevant sounds" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 40). This is the unresolvable paradox of

rock: a rock performer is an artist and a musician. Thus he or she wishes to remain honest, authentic, sincere, and artistically respectable, but he or she also wishes to reach many people with his or her music and achieve critical and popular acclaim. This paradox was in pointed relief with grunge: the music's very name indicates its defining characteristic and the reason for its popularity. Grunge became popular because it was not written or performed with the intention of impressing anyone or being popular. There was a purity and an innocence about the entire "movement" (although grunge had become disillusioned with the idea of coherent, effective "movements" in popular music) which bordered on the naïve. Unable to reconcile the paradoxical requirements inherent in authenticity and success, grunge was too innocent to survive the machinations of capitalism, and it thus perished with its biggest figurehead: Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. New metal's sentiment towards the naïveté of grunge ranges from sighing acceptance of its non-viability to outright disdain. Jonathan Davis showed his reluctance to nod in the direction of grunge when he said, about the music his band makes: "No one has come up with a really good fuckin' name to call this. Nirvana had grunge, and I guess that's cool" (http://www.korn.com), and Rob Zombie revealed his sentiments in the following interview excerpt:

> CDNOW: You succeeded even though it wasn't cool to be a rock star in the early '90s, with the rise of all those earnest, my-life-sucks bands.
>
> ROB ZOMBIE: To me that was just a bunch of bullshit. Their pose as rock stars was to act like they're not rock stars. But what does being a "rock star" mean, and why is it always bad? Does a baseball player walk on a field and say, "Whatever you do, don't call me a baseball player?" It's what you do. It

> doesn't have to be thought of negatively or egotistically. All those bands were so bent on convincing the world they were sincere and unhappy; I think they sucked the life out of the music. (Kot http://www.cdnow.com)

New metal artists agree that music must stop being mopey and downcast. They have infused their music with rhythm, dance, techno, visual spectacle, and irony. But despite their increased sales and popularity, they are concerned with issues of authenticity. Rob Zombie makes almost no money because he insists that his shows be "good"; he thus resists selling out by refusing to "profiteer" and by putting all he can into elaborate spectacles which conform as much as possible with his vision of a good stage show. Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Deftones all focus more energy on the music and less on the use of visual images. Their lyrics are intensely personal, introspective, and brutally honest. They apologize to no one and avoid any type of media-conscious "construction" in their work. Marilyn Manson is more like Rob Zombie; their image is totally constructed. They have become very successful by being "shocking," but their authenticity lies, like Rob Zombie, in their urge to create work that they like. Their lyrics lash out at concepts which have important roles in our society, and the musicians even undermine themselves by sarcastically insulting the ideal "rock star" image—consider the lyrics to Marilyn Manson's song "Mister Superstar":

> Hey Mr. Superstar, I'll do anything for you
> I'm your number one fan
> Hey Mr. Porno Star, I,I,I,I want you
> Hey Mr. Sickly Star, I want to get sick from you
> Hey Mr. Fallen Star, don't you know I worship you

Hey Mr. Big Rock Star, I wanna grow up just like you

I know that I can turn you on

I wish I could just turn you off

I never wanted this

Hey Mr. Superhate, I just want to love you

Hey Mr. Superfuck, I wanna go down on you

Hey Mr. Supergod, will you answer my prayers

Hey Hey Hey Mr. Superman I wanna be your little girl

Hey Mr. Superstar, I'll kill myself for you

Hey Mr. Superstar, I'll kill myself if I can't have you

Superstar, Superfuck baby

Also, after achieving hyper-success with their "Antichrist Superstar" image, Marilyn Manson shifted radically and surprisingly to a David Bowie-esque androgynous, futuristic, glamourous, mechanical image. In other words, while these bands have all achieved astounding success, they all hold on to a desire for authenticity, and thus experience, to varying degrees, a dividing contradiction. The optimism of early rock lies primarily in its confidence in, as Hibbard and Kaleialoha write, "reshaping and redefining their world" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 40). But that idea is no longer viable to new metal musicians, and thus they are unable to resolve the rock music paradox as effectively as past rock musicians. New metal artists appear to believe that virtues like soul, passion, meaning, and substance cannot survive in a state of purity—like 1950s rock and roll musicians thought they could and 1990s grunge musicians thought they couldn't—without being savvy and engaging with the corrupt, capitalist world and

essentially falling from innocence. But sheer disillusionment was the job of grunge. New metal artists are now raging not against the machine (for rage *is* the machine now), but they are raging against *not* raging. Each new metal artist I have chosen to examine deals with this problem with his own approach.

Rob Zombie ignores the problem altogether, chooses one segment of pop-culture imagery he particularly likes, and re-shapes it into a metal mold, as is visible in his song "Return of the Phantom Stranger":

> Shape shifting high and a haunted eye
>
> Falling plastic and paper demons
>
> No trace of time, I'm branded sly
>
> I am your ghostmaster baby free me.
>
> All you know is alone, you see a phantom stranger
>
> Down you go all alone, you love a phantom stranger.

Marilyn Manson satirizes the shape of the world by profanely interbreeding its images (from the song "Angel with the Scabbed Wings": "He's the angel with the scabbed wings / Hard drug face want to powder his nose") and by mocking its lack of concrete foundation ("God is in the TV," from the song "Rock is Dead"). Bands like Korn and Deftones celebrate and cling to what they feel is left of their perception of human soul—as defined by the dominant norms of popular culture—by shrieking out its very shapeless essence, emptiness, and worry, like in Deftones' song "7 Words": "I've been humming too many words / got a weak self-esteem / that's been stomped away from every single dream." Thus, the consciousness of the inability to reshape and redefine the world—lacked by previous rock movements—is a primary factor in new metal.

Rock historians write that "both the sounds of protest and utopian glory provide insights into the perceptions, motivations, and aspirations of the discontented young" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 40); it can be said that new metal's sounds of confusion, resignation, celebration, and dystopic perversion provide insights into the perceptions and anxieties of today's young. That new metal, with all its paradoxical panic-attacks and fun raging, is so popular signals its connection to the young people who are listening, watching, and buying.

> The seeds of today's image-driven culture were growing even in the '60s, when the decline of 'intermediate associations', such as the church, family, and small community; the decreasing amount of 'meaningful work'; ... and the populace's increased awareness of living in a world of images created by the mass media and advertising, were viewed as explanations for the growing social unrest, ... The lives of these young people constituted a day-to-day reaction to an 'unreal' world which was all too 'real'." (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 41)

But now the world of images is so all-inclusive that people risk losing awareness of being inside it, for one can be aware of being "inside" something only if one can perceive its borders, its edges. Social unrest is at a popularity low, for few people perceive anything that needs to change. Now pop culture allows room only for benign unrest, because

> [e]verywhere socialization is measured by the exposure to media messages. Whoever is under-exposed to the media is desocialized or virtually asocial. Everywhere information is thought to produce an accelerated circulation of meaning, ... even if the waste is enormous, a general consensus would have it

> that nevertheless, as a whole, there be an excess of meaning, which is redistributed at all the interstices of the social—just as consensus would have it that material production, despite its dysfunctions and irrationalities, opens onto an excess of wealth and social purpose. We are all complicitous in this myth. It is the alpha and omega of our modernity, without which the credibility of our social organization would collapse. Well, *the fact is that it is collapsing*... (Baudrillard 80)

Thanks to the omnipresence of socialization, any real attempt at change is looked upon as "rocking the boat" and is not "cool." Thus, in order to be accepted by pop culture and by themselves, new metal artists must rage benignly—they must have fun.

"By the late 1960s an increasing number of young people felt caught in a time when two ages, two cultures overlapped; they had 'no standard, no security, no simple acquiescence'. ... For them the dominant culture had overextended itself and become divorced from life" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 77). Today new metal sounds like it is not caught between two ages, but is, instead, on the edge of limbo, unable to see any reality, contradictory or not. Whether the dominant culture is or is not divorced from life is no longer an issue for new metal, and today's young people are responding to statements that life itself is difficult to define in contrast to a dominant culture of images so intertwined with life that the two have become inextricable from each other. The new metal generation is now too experienced to revolt against dominant popular culture paradigms. Because we know that such a revolt has already been tried and has failed, even if today's savvy youth feel that they are unhappy with the state of culture

today, to revolt against it now would simply end in mockery, so instead they are screaming, dancing, buying, and selling.

Before, in 1970, it was thought that "[a]ny possibilities for change lay in a more distant future, and the best the people could hope for was the maintenance of their own values within their own lives" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 98). We are now in that distant future, and youth still appear to be fighting for balance within their own lives. David Crosby summarized the death of pop culture mass movement at the moment it died: "I'm really sick of the talk and I'm really sick of the kids I see at rallies and stuff. Hey, they're jokes. Fuckin' revolution, man. They forget that they already ate revolution alive. That's not happening, man" (qtd. in Hibbard and Kaleialoha 99). New metal artists are sick of the "fuckin' revolution" in the wake of Crosby's moment of disillusionment, and new metal music reflects a generation trying to figure out what to do with their discontent, since they cannot revolt. Crosby had announced that "The dream was over. Reality time had arrived" (qtd. in Hibbard and Kaleialoha 99). New metal has announced that it is past reality time, and that no one is sure what reality is. The music is expressing a desire to "recognize the need to establish an operative individual-society relationship" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 99), as well as being resigned to the possibility that this cannot be achieved, because individual and society have become inseparable. In 1969 it was recognized that "rock was 'a product created, distributed, and controlled for the profit of American (and international) business.' Such a relationship ultimately doomed rock 'to a bitter impotence' as the music remained subservient to those whom it attacked, turning a profit for corporate America" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 135). This was one of the

reasons for "the evaporation of the rock revolution" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 134). It is by examining this situation in rock's past that we can understand why new metal is so incredibly angry, volatile, and kinetic, while being at the same directionless, inarticulate, unmotivated, de-politicized, and introspective. The music is not apathetic; it reflects a confused pathos. In response to an interviewer's question, "Why aren't you guys political?," Limp Bizkit vocalist Fred Durst replied,

> Because I don't have any...I sing about what's happening in my life and what's going on in my life. I don't know a fucking thing about politics, I don't watch the news. You watch the news, there's too many murders, too much shit. I hate violence, you know, but I'm all into expressing your anger, fear, and frustration, and like, getting it out of you. You know, everything on my record is, every song is about a particular person, a particular something that's happened to me with a girl or a guy or a bad experience, you know. That's what's locked up inside of me. (Wurm http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Towers/6239/Bizkit.html)

Clearly, new metal musicians continue to feel dissatisfaction with the state of their world. But there is an illuminating difference between this dissatisfaction and the focused, political, sit-in, rallying dissatisfaction of earlier rock. In addition to knowing of the failure of past sincerity in rock, today's generation is expressing a recognition of the image-saturated techno-culture that Baudrillard has identified, as well as a confusion regarding what is noble, what is realistic, how the two differ, and which is better. The new metal sound is permeated with what Jean Baudrillard identifies as absolute-advertising, by a sense of the problem of how to go about pursuing what the

artists choose when they know that anything they choose to believe in will become either an over-played radio-single, an annoying (yet probably perplexingly successful) advertising slogan, or a mind-controlling news update. One example of this is Marilyn Manson's lyric "Norm life baby / We're quitters and we're sober / our confessions will be televised" from the song "I Don't Like the Drugs but the Drugs Like Me." New metal artists share Jean Baudrillard's view of a "sociality everywhere present, an absolute sociality finally realized in absolute advertising—that is to say, also totally dissolved, a vestige of sociality hallucinated on all the walls in the simplified form of a demand of the social that is immediately met by the echo of advertising" (Baudrillard 88).

One of the most prominent qualities of new metal is the degree to which they are media-savvy, alluding to television and film in their music and using new communications technology—such as the internet—to their maximal advantage. Their awareness of the fact that hegemonic popular culture has acquired so much conceptual ground and has learned how to acquire new territory at such a speed has made it impossible for them to believe that anything can stay "pure" and unsold for any reasonable length of time. The 1970s brought "the assimilation of countercultural forms and styles into the commercial sphere both as products and sales aids ... and the definition of deviant behaviour" as "harmless, trivial, or a part of the mainstream" (Hibbard and Kaleialoha 144). To understand new metal, we must recognize today's capitalism as demanding and insisting that youth continually seek out the new, fresh, and exotic while capitalism continually dismisses the new as "passé" in order to persuade impressionable, wealthy young people to continually buy new things which

will be made old almost instantaneously. This paradoxical situation has inevitably fostered the confused frustration of new metal. The hysterical, unfocused rage, flippant, ironic sarcasm, and glib parody of new metal appear as natural reactions to an unsuppressable need to act which is thwarted by a conceptual wall that reads "Already been done" in every direction chosen. This situation started to take shape in the 1970s. It was during this time that the relation between dominant popular culture and real life became seriously confused, and that the pure and simple "rock and roll vs. the system" paradigm of the 1950s and 1960s began to fall apart. Media images and external social behaviour of the 1970s proposed to indicate a change in the cultural atmosphere: sexuality and profanity became more commonplace, "shock value" was seen as a marketable quality, and heavy metal came into being with such shocking acts as Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath, and, later, Alice Cooper, KISS, W.A.S.P., etc. Individual freedom had passed from the realm of the sublimated internal fantasy of the 1950s, through the domain of real life in the 1960s, and into the realm of hyperbolic external fantasy in the 1970s, out of reach of average, everyday youth. Repressive cultural authority may have been shaken, but that simply strengthened its roots and caused it to become even more insidious and ubiquitous. Thus cartoons such as "Heavy Metal" came into prominence, featuring sex, profanity, and obscenity, but real life for the average North American citizen remained repressed, with sex being as dirty and shameful as it was it the 1950s. The difference is that the heirs to the rock and roll thrones of Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, and Elvis Presley could not simply fight against the repression anymore. Such action had come to be treated as passé, naïve, "old news," stale, and not worth doing, because, according to all appearances,

dominant popular culture had paved the way for freedom from such repression—after all, the media was saturated with sexy and obscene images. But those images were only images. Already they were not reflecting any similar reality. People were not enjoying free love anymore. Sex was relegated to open displays on billboards and movie and television screens, or to hidden motel trysts after a night of night-clubbing. This frustrating cultural condition has become more intense with time.

In this chapter I have attempted to show that looking at certain aspects of, and moments in, rock and roll's past is integral to understanding the creation of the unique brand of heavy music currently receiving much popular, but almost no critical, attention. In my next chapter I will analyze the paradoxical nature of new metal and place it in a postmodern context. By comparing it to the angry popular music which was still being produced when new metal began to become popular, I will illustrate how new metal has flowed from that music and how new metal is engaged with and is a product of today's popular culture. I will also apply to an understanding of new metal certain concepts and ideas used by rock musicologists Neil Nehring, Simon Reynolds, and Joy Press concerning rebellion, abjection, and postmodernism.

Chapter II

Postmetalism: New Metal and Postmodernism

A girl walks across the patio of a suburban coffee shop on a sunny day, wearing a very short skirt, bare legs, a very tight and very short-sleeved low-cut shirt which shows off her still under-developed breasts. Her feminine contours are emphasized, but are not yet fully realized. Why does she dress this way? Not because it suits her; as she walks her eyes dart, her brow rises, her arms fold across her chest, her feet drag. Her tentative manner is at odds with her revealing attire, and evokes images and norms dominant in current advertising more than an inner sensuality or confidence. It seems that perhaps advertising media imagery has caused her to want to dress this way because this attire is "feminine" in the "right" way. The point here is that, as the cliché states, sex sells. But we must ask: from where did advertising media obtain this image? What is it reflecting? It is not reflecting anything. Advertising media imagery is looking less and less to actual people, events, and conditions for its images; people are looking more frequently than ever to advertising media imagery for guidance. While constructivism is a centuries-old phenomenon and is not peculiar to postmodernism, the acceleration of the degree to which widespread imagery is constructing the lived experience of those who are exposed to it is now having tangible effects on those people. It seems that people are increasingly living in reference to images produced by the media, constantly comparing themselves to them, and judging themselves and others accordingly.

For example, "Lush" has been a popular dance club in Edmonton for approximately three years, but it no longer attracts people who want to dance. Now the people who go to Lush are going there to act out scripts. This is evident through, among other things, the way they dance. They have very little rhythm, and the movements of their bodies have almost no relation to the music being played. Their dance pattern remains constant throughout the whole song, regardless of the song's dynamics. Their eyes are wide and looking around at everyone else, to make sure they are "doing it right" and to make sure that everyone else sees them doing it right. Some get rowdy and have "lots of fun" because that's the "cool" thing to do. This is evidenced through the decontextualization of their actions. Their behaviour seems unrelated to the subtleties of the Lush environment: the music, the other people, etc. Also, people are "making out" everywhere. They are not lying on couches though, nor sitting in stairwells, retreating to car seats, or finding secluded corridors. They are "dirty dancing" on the dance floor. This in itself is not noteworthy, until they are doing it "to" music like Korn, house techno music, and 1980s rap music. They are not doing it because the music is appropriate, suggestive, or arousing. They are doing it because it is the thing to do. "Getting dirty" on the dance floor is a popular notion right now, seemingly as an attempt to experience past sensual experiences of our culture, and the sensuality of other cultures. Their behaviour appears to be reproducing such things as the Hollywood film "Dirty Dancing" from the 1980s, Latin American dancing, and images from today's music videos in rap, dance, and pop. But the music they are dancing to is none of these. It is 1990s heavy metal, techno, and rock. They continue dancing unaffected when the DJ changes from a metal set to a punk set, and from a

techno set to a grunge set. Everything they now do is "in quotation marks," an artificial reproduction of an image they want to experience. People are not dancing because they are letting themselves go, or are being moved by the sound of the music. Now dancing is a self-conscious project, a self-contained scenario that comes from outside of the dancers, which they deliberately re-enact regardless of the actual sound of the music surrounding them. Here is the (continually less visible) schism between the controlled, constructed, fictional, "ideal" realm of advertising media imagery and reality. This "simulated" behaviour is symptomatic of the same cultural state of affairs manifested in new metal. Both are reflecting and negotiating the new level of postmodernity characterizing the end of the millennium. What I describe has already been observed by Jean Baudrillard: "[a] sociality everywhere present, an absolute sociality finally realized in absolute advertising—that is to say, also totally dissolved, a vestige of sociality hallucinated on all the walls in the simplified form of a demand of the social that is immediately met by the echo of advertising. The social as a script, whose bewildered audience we are" (88). Rock music scholars such as Neil Nehring have also discussed "such regrettable cases as the 'fratboys' at a Rage Against the Machine show described by Valerie Agnew of 7 Year Bitch, who 'were just singing along with rebellion' and 'did *not* get the message at all'" (Nehring xxi).

To begin the second chapter, I will examine new metal using the perspective of Simon Reynolds' and Joy Press' book, *The Sex Revolts*, which deals with rock music through history with a framework of cultural theory (a rare and valuable combination). *The Sex Revolts* is a book about gender in rock, and while my study is not particularly interested in this area, gender is inextricably bound up with psychological processes

and matters of the spirit and soul—of *feeling*—processes and matters which new metal addresses almost exclusively, while grafting them onto a very corporeal rhythmic vehicle. The book's title suggests that the rock Reynolds and Press are studying rebels against standards of gender and that issues of sex/gender are often linked with feelings of disgust and with unpleasant ideas and images. These ideas are well-suited to new metal, which revolts in form, sound, and lyrical content. Reynolds and Press cover a vast area of rock music, and I will use only a handful of their ideas, where they are useful to me and related to my project.

Reynolds and Press begin their book with a chapter entitled "Angry Young Men: precursors and prototypes of male rebellion," which is an appropriate discussion for me to use to move from history into contemporary cultural study. They write that

> Male rebellion is a re-enactment of the primal break that constitutes the male ego: the separation of infant from the maternal realm, the exile from paradise. The rebel re-enacts the process of inidividuation in endless and diverse rites of severance, continually flees domesticity. Inevitably, this flight is alloyed with regret, and often—as in the music of the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix—leads on to a quest for a new home; unrest subsides and comes to berth in a mystical or idealised maternal idyll. As Nietzche put it: 'to build a new sanctuary the old sanctuary must be first destroyed.' (2)

This is a lucid point which serves as a foil for understanding new metal. Much of the newness of new metal lies in the fact that many understandings of past popular music cannot be used by scholars, listeners, and participants to come to grips with new metal. New metal is indeed rebelling in many ways, but in others ways it is very much *not-*

rebelling. And, still in other ways, it is transcending the polarized dichotomy of rebellion and acceptance. Thus the above illustration of the rebel is useful, but not applicable. New metal is responding to the disappearance of "the new sanctuary" from visibility. Rock rebellion has not found a new sanctuary which is satisfying to new metal artists, and thus their music is expressing anxiety about this spiritual and literal "homelessness." But, even prior to this anxiety is the fact that the "old sanctuary" has been discovered to be so entrenched, abstracted, and ubiquitous that not only is it possibly indestructible, but its destruction may have very negative consequences for the musicians. With no new forms of expression on the horizon to express their experience and era—indeed, new metal artists feel they are confronting a pure void when they look to the future of their lives and of their culture (as Marilyn Manson sings in "Great Big White World": "I dreamed I was a spaceman / burned like a moth in a flame / and our world was so fucking gone / but I'm not attached to your world / nothing heals and nothing grows")—destruction of the present structure may be an act of sheer folly. In an interview posted on http://www.korn.com, Jonathan Davis said "Yeah, I am really pissed off that I inherited this world. I wish sometimes I was born back in the day because today's society is just so fucked up. Now it's just ridiculous."

New metal artists are aware that rock has been rebelling against controlling discourses, seeking freedom and autonomy. They have also realized, in a seriously postmodern turn, that this rebellion is itself a controlling discourse. This idea was what brought an end to the authenticity of grunge music: they became popular because they were indifferent to popular music standards of popularity, and thus rebelling became "cool" and ceased to be rebellion, and then was no longer cool, and became unpopular.

Thus, what new metal artists are revolting against is not "the system," but *systems*. As if this were not disconcerting enough, new metal artists are realizing that systems are ubiquitous, and thus inescapable. They know that they cannot escape, for they are confronted with controlling images in every direction they turn. Victims of the cliché that "everything has been done before," they are seeing that no matter what route they choose, their identity will always already be or have been constructed for them. They are therefore not tangibly focussing their energies on reversing an identified evil, nor are they singing the virtues of any status quo. As in a standard horror film, new metal artists express a sensation of being surrounded by mocking, incomprehensible forces which want to drain out their identity and take control of them. They cannot move, but they cannot stand still. Panicked, new metal is screaming for lack of other routes of action. But, contrary to most angry music, they are not screaming with words—not entirely.

Much new metal music is characterized by elements of shock, excess, and incomprehensibility. These elements are techniques used by new metal artists to come to grips with a culture overloaded with information and drained of meaning. Jonathan Davis' "tongue-speak" is a manifestation of the tension resulting from a profiteering music industry which rewards musicians for what they do while trapping them and disempowering their expressive capacity, and of the confusion resulting from the ubiquity of the shallow image and the neutralizing of language. Korn's song "Twist" is the purest example of this phenomenon—panicked, growling, confused, angry, whining guttural utterance over droning, buzzing, heavily rhythmic music. The song "Seed" has similar qualities; Jonathan Davis' use of the word "fuck" is very effective

in conveying his frustration and confusion. It often has no obvious referent, such as in the first line of the song "Justin": "Fuck all that bullshit!" The most potent and stirring example of this is in the song "Reclaim my Place," which discusses alienation and revenge (from and on forces not fully specified). In the song Davis repeats the line "What the fuck?" as a refrain. The expletive has no referent, and fully embodies not only the absence of answers to his questions, but the larger absence of questions to ask, of frameworks of understanding, and of points of departure.

Fred Durst, especially on Limp Bizkit's first album, increases the intensity of his utterances to the point of incoherence. The emotion which colours his vocalization at times overcomes the linguistic emphasis of his singing and transforms it almost into musical crying, into pure hysteria, such as at the end of "Pollution." The same is true of Chino Moreno and his vocalizations on Deftones' albums. His lyrics are at times indecipherable because of the confused hysteria of his emotion. Also, his lyrics are extremely poetic, rivaling the vagueness of lyrics penned by Beck and by R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe. This contributes to the frantic, confused quality of the music. In the song "7 Words," Moreno, in a performance similar to Jonathan Davis' expletive surrepetition, shrieks repeatedly "Suck! Suck! Suck! Suck! Suck!" until the word seems to lose all meaning. The difficulty of reconciling authenticity with the loss of meaning caused by today's hyper-media, accompanied with chart-success, is apparent in Korn's "Reclaim My Place," in which Jonathan Davis sings "Give him something to say / Something super fly, never play / All I hear is disgrace" ("fly" meaning stylish or cool). In "Freak on a Leash," we hear: "Feeling like a freak on leash / Feeling like I have no release / How many times have I felt diseased? / Nothing in my life is free."

In response to today's scarcity of unclaimed image-territory, Marilyn Manson has taken up what has been called "shock rock." Thus the visual imagery used by the band is intentionally over-the-top. Shock rock is not a new phenomenon; Marilyn Manson is following in the footsteps of Alice Cooper and Ozzy Osbourne. It is thus that Marilyn Manson must be *even more* shocking. In a semantic environment where every space has been occupied and defused, Marilyn Manson is striving to take up visual turf-space that has remained unoccupied. The imagery in the package of their 1996 album entitled "Antichrist Superstar" is centred on corporeal decay and disease, and angels. Angels are shown to be of flesh and mortal. Underneath the cd tray is a diagram showing the muscles, skeleton, and circulatory system of an angel. The front cover shows a dirty, scarred, bandaged angel with tubes hanging from its groin. The inside of the liner contains various photos involving skulls, blood, decaying semi-human beings, human larvae, and designs evoking dated scientific research. The back of the cd package is a photo of Manson standing bandaged, legs spread, between two other sitting band members. Each of the other two people wears on his face a hospital oxygen mask with a tube connected to a hose worn on Manson's crotch. One can speculate on the potential meanings of these images. By fusing angels with flesh, it is possible that Marilyn Manson is illustrating the transitory nature of the icons in which people of today's culture put their faith. This could show that, contrary to the elevated, super-human status they have been given, the figureheads of today's mass culture are merely human like those who idolize them, and are as subject to the same forces (time, elements, disease, etc.) as any earthly thing. The last image I mentioned could signify that celebrities must perform the same unmentionable bodily functions as everyone

else, or that the products and works that everybody adores and purchases (music, film, sports, etc.) are merely waste product from the lives of those celebrities, or even that the worship of celebrities has escalated to the point that people consume even the bodily waste of celebrities. What is most likely, though, is that Marilyn Manson is using shock simply for the sake of shock, in order to cause people to think critically about the nature of shock, offense, controversy, and cultural rules, and perhaps even to show that the only ideas that have not been played out to exhaustion today are shocking and offensive. The imagery in their next album, "Mechanical Animals," is radically different from that of "Antichrist Superstar," but equally bizarre. It evokes a science-fiction-like future that is completely sterile, too clean, drug-based, and androgynous. Manson wears wild, tight, flashy clothing, and outlandishly colourful make-up. Pictures of hospital graphs and machinery, drug paraphernalia, keys on a computer keyboard, and various numbers, codes, and binary sequences are plentiful. The back of the cd package shows a small, simple figure typically used to designate a men's washroom, but one arm is longer than the other. The most striking image is on the front of the package—it is an entirely white-skinned Manson with overly long fingers, nipple-less breasts and a bulging crotch. This imagery is a visual equivalent of Jonathan Davis' psychotic, unintelligible, shrieking babble. It is psychotic, unnerving, shocking, unsettling, and lacks definite semantic, linguistic meaning.

Marilyn Manson's view of the world is apparent in their songs' lyrics, such as "You were automatic and hollow as the 'o' in god," "our earth is too grey but when the spirit is so digital the body acts this way," "when you love it you know it's not real," and "I'm as fake as wedding cake." Given the emptiness in their picture of the world,

Marilyn Manson's visual images are no surprise. The images have no concrete significance beyond myriad possible symbolic resonances, and in their general meaninglessness they are the sole property of the band. In a world where beauty has become insignificant because of its status as the ubiquitous standard, Marilyn Manson revel in ugliness. They express a feeling, as does Korn, that any comprehensible utterance will be appropriated by the money-making image-circulation system. It is thus that, as a vow of authenticity, they choose to go beyond the security of comprehensible words and images in order to resist cooption by any preexisting signifying system. They are screaming, for a lack of meaningful words—Korn is screaming aurally, Marilyn Manson is screaming visually. Rob Zombie's imagery is similar in function to Marilyn Manson's, but it is more playful. Rob Zombie's work goes "over the top" as well, but whereas Marilyn Manson's implies a more sober-faced disgust and a defamiliarization in the manner of the Russian Formalists, Rob Zombie's imagery and live performances suggest carnivalesque fun and entertainment. Again, some of the imagery in Rob Zombie's album liner are reproductions of arcane scientific and spiritual diagrams which today have lost their original value and significance and for that reason are interesting. But most of his imagery is simultaneously silly to today's generation and hyper-offensive to previous generations. In fact, its over-offensiveness is what *makes* it silly. Pictures of goofy monster puppets subtitled "DESTROY," ghouls framed by rows of teeth and overlaid with "THE DEVIL'S MEN ARE HERE," and old-style comic book collages of Zombie's face, naked women, and skeletons advertising licentious freak-shows all poke fun at the sensitivity of past pop culture and mock them for even giving meaning

to such images. This is the crucial point in Zombie's imagery: it is meaningless by today's pop-cultural lexicon by virtue of being the lexicon of previous pop culture. It derides past pop culture for being serious about meaning. Other new metal bands show differing levels of concern and anxiety over today's disappearance of meaning, but Rob Zombie laughs about it, and thus makes his career. The current inability to rebel and the acknowledgment of the ubiquity of the drained image has caused the disintegration of self-identity, apparent in the lyrics of Korn, Deftones, and Limp Bizkit and in the imagery of Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie. All of the techniques and elements I've outlined are used by new metal artists to fight against a sense of emptiness which they appear to feel is plaguing today's culture and consuming everything around them. For this reason, one of Reynolds' and Press' chapters, entitled "Flirting with the void: Abjection in rock," helps to shed some light on the experience and expressions of new metal artists. The authors discuss rock's love-hate relationship with "abjection," a concept they describe as female bodily fluid associated with "going under," "stagnation," "castration," identity loss, stasis, immobility, and death. While they view this conflict through the lens of gender, equating, on behalf of male rockers, abjection with the womb, the concept of abjection in rock is well suited to an examination of new metal. (A more comprehensive discussion of the concept of abjection can be found in Julia Kristeva's *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection.*)

Reynolds' and Press' chapter begins with discussions of explicitly sexual issues in older punk music, moves through a discussion of gore and muck and explicit bodily violence, then becomes more applicable to new metal as it deals with new metal's

predecessors, grunge. They accurately describe Alice In Chains' album, *Dirt*, as "literally doom laden, like limbs struggling to avoid being sucked down into the slough of despond" (Reynolds and Press 96) and point out such lyrical themes as "born into the grave" and the "slow castration" of love. While the description of the riffs is well suited to the riffs of Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Deftones, the abjection being resisted in the lyrics is of a different nature. The authors go on to discuss the lyrics and media images of Nirvana, the best-known grunge band. Nirvana and grunge are described as "the sound of *castration blues*," (emphasis mine 96) and possessing a "turgidity [which] embodies the struggle *not to go under*," (emphasis mine 96). Themes of "political and existential impotence" and "being 'neutered and spayed'" (96-7) characterize Nirvana's work. According to the authors,

> Ann Powers has argued that their success was a desperate attempt by the rock community to resurrect the phallus (a return to hard, masculine, aggressive sound, to rock as a signifier for youth rebellion). But the crucial qualifier is that it was a *failed* attempt, closer to flaunting the scars of castration. When the band wore dresses in the video for 'In Bloom', Nirvana weren't just deflating/mocking grunge's hard rock masculinism... (97)

Nirvana's lyrics are characterized as peppered with signs of a desire to return to the womb—to domesticity, idleness, and abjection—and "to refuse manhood in a world where most manifestations of masculinity are loathsome, a desire to be infantalised and emasculated" (97). Nirvana fans are described as "feeling that they have no defense against stagnation ... twenty-somethings who were directionless, incapable of personal or political commitment ... But unlike the Clash, Nirvana couldn't shift from

dormant to militant because, like most of the American underground, they were skeptical about attempts to politicize rock and marshal it into a movement" (98). New metal has realized that grunge was a failed attempt at meaning-creation, and thus refuses to go the same route in terms of giving in to abjection. While grunge was skeptical about popular discourses, new metal is skeptical about skepticism. The abjection that new metal is resisting does not take the same form as the abjection which riddled Alice in Chains and Nirvana. While the latter bands were plagued with drugs, gender, love, and politics, new metal is taking on a demon far broader in scope: the aforementioned loss of identity caused by a postmodern capitalist system of meaning making that appropriates all signs, symbols, and images.

New metal artists have seen in grunge that resisting capitalism results only in self-destruction. In refusing to adopt the resistance stance of grunge, they are also experiencing the theft of self-respect, meaning, and identity resulting from hyper-capitalism, or what Jean Baudrillard calls "the era of murder by simulation" (Baudrillard 24), for "[a]ll current forms of activity tend toward advertising and most exhaust themselves therein," and "[t]hus the form of advertising has imposed itself and developed at the expense of all the other languages as an increasingly neutral, equivalent rhetoric, without affects" (Baudrillard 87, 88). Exemplifying and expressing this, Deftones' Chino Moreno sings, in "Lhabia": "Somewhere, outside, there are tricks and evil ... I don't want to go, but I want it. Well at least, you fucking care. ... I'll be faint, like a crook. It looks and feels great, but look at what's it's doing to you, but that's ok, look at how it feels." The media savvy post-grunge generation knows unhappily that "[n]o one would grant the least consent, the least devotion to a

real person. It is to his double, he being always already *dead*, to which allegiance is given" (Baudrillard 26) and, knowing this, exists in the "[h]ell of simulation, which is no longer one of torture, but of the subtle, maleficent, elusive twisting of meaning" (Baudrillard 18).

The abjection faced by new metal is not the bodily fluid, but the bodily vacuum, the pixel, the photograph, the word, all of which are becoming arbitrary assemblages which refer to nothing but themselves and each other. This abjection takes the form of a nothingness, where reality is unlocatable because it is, as Baudrillard writes, "[m]ore real than real, [and] that is how the real is abolished" (81). (Few comparisons could be more strikingly evident than White Zombie's biggest hit single, in 1995, entitled "More Human than Human.") To new metal artists, all spiritual, social, and political directions are identical and equally meaningless in any terms other than dollars and popularity. Still, in the face of such complete hopelessness, the very presence of new metal indicates a refusal to "go under." Faced with the apparent fact that nothing said can possibly have any meaning, new metal continues to speak. Some lyrics, like Korn's, cling to the fact that directionlessness and lack of meaning can be articulated, while others, like Marilyn Manson, satirize those who continue to speak a semantic language owned and written by capitalist forces. Still others, such as Deftones, re-appropriate the language stolen by capitalism by explicitly and gradually degenerating it into nonsense or by stringing together words like an abstract jigsaw puzzle, to be arranged and concretized into meaning only by the listener. New metal shows that despite what the death of grunge may suggest, abjection can be resisted until one is utterly and absolutely silent, and still.

As I have already discussed, one of new metal's unique elements is its orientation towards rhythm, dance, and the body. While heavy music has always had some form of corporeal element, new metal involves the body in the music in ways which are relatively new to metal. Reynolds and Press illustrate a prior approach to the body in heavy music by discussing metal/punk musician/songwriter/author/vocalist Henry Rollins. They point out that Rollins had very little sense of identity as a youth and lacked a male role model growing up (a situation common to Nirvana's Kurt Cobain and Korn's Jonathan Davis). He learned to work out with weights and "never looked back." Rollins describes his weight training as a mystical experience, and Rollins' own description of his experience of withdrawal from weight lifting is similar to the experience of abjection. Rollins' spiritual state is frankly related to his physical state. While Nirvana drew from Rollins as a musical influence, Nirvana ignored his emphasis on the body, and thus fell prey to the increasingly discarded Cartesian body/mind division. Certainly grunge lyrics often addressed the body, bodily indicators (lips, teeth, and throat sounds) were present in the vocalizations, and moshing was an utterly physical experience, but these did not represent the inclusion of the body in the grunge experience. The body-oriented lyrics were primarily naturalist, speaking of organs, disease, pain, and drug addiction. The bodily sounds in the vocals were side effects of rage and never took on the primacy of new metal's corporeality. Moshing, in being a randomly chaotic mish-mashing of bodies, did not so much emphasize the experience of the physical sensations as it did the venting of spiritual anguish and the drowning of the body.

Being arational, the emotive language of physical sensation and the body cannot be appropriated and collapsed into non-meaning simulacra, for it lacks tangible, circulating words. The discourse of emotion and the body is vague and unformed, unable to be packaged and concretized into words shared by language-users in a set of conventions; since emotion and feeling cannot be strictly defined, they cannot be *re*-defined, until virtual reality becomes as ubiquitous as posters and highway billboards, making emotion and sensation a shared, common discourse of the same order as words and images. Thus the music of some new metal bands and the imagery of others are very corporeally-oriented. Korn, Deftones, and Limp Bizkit produce music soaked in what Roland Barthes calls "grain." To summarize, Barthes defines this as the corporeal dimension of the human voice which gives it its individuality. The more grain is present in an utterance, the more one can hear the presence of the speaker's/singer's physical body. There is absolutely no erasure of the physical and spatial specificity, or of the grain, of new metal performance in the recordings. Human limitation is made instrumental in the form of distortion and the sounds of lips, teeth, throat, tongue, mouth, and breath. Even the intonation of the vocals is too-human: whining, pleading, raging, crying, and laughing. New metal artists are never simply singing; their songs are always living, always alive.

Even more than "grain" and emotion, this inclusion of the body in the experience of new metal music focuses on dance. Not the same kind of choreographed dance as saccharine dance-pop acts, but a dance closer to rave techno dancing—a bouncing and movement of the limbs to heighten the experience of the "groove" of the music. While this dancing gets very frenzied, it is never of the same chaotic order as

moshing, which was a random response to a comparatively "grooveless" music. Korn and Limp Bizkit are particularly dance-oriented: Jonathan Davis sings "So come dance with me" and "Get your boogie on," and Fred Durst sings "Now you mother fuckers got a reason to jump" and "Do you wanna catch the vibe that's keepin' me alive? Following these phat-ass beats until I die." This aspect of new metal's corporeality, while fighting capitalism's and postmodernism's ubiquitous non-referentiality, also leads to an analysis of one of new metal's most important defining characteristics: fusion. Ethnomusicology has not created appropriate materials to bring to bear on this aspect of new metal. To adequately analyze this dimension of new metal, one may have to travel discursively from Reynolds and Press to Mary Louise Pratt. New metal's fusion of black- and white-American popular music styles bears important signification in terms of understanding new metal as a reflection of the culture. The reasons for and meanings of the marriage of hip hop and metal approaches are myriad and fascinating and likely merit an entire independent study. Because such inter-cultural considerations are somewhat separate from concepts of simulacra, hypermarket, and information/communications technology, I will be addressing them only in passing in this study.

Historically speaking, new metal bands have been the artists the most reactive to the drainage of authenticity caused by today's advanced capitalism to top popularity charts. Grunge bands were incredibly popular, but were still grounded in conventional rock techniques, plain, straightforward imagery, and in language (whether or not the lyrics were recognizable, the *words* were still *there*). Neil Nehring's study addresses the problem of the inauthenticity of anger in rock music and examines punk, grunge,

and riot grrrls. While he makes myriad invaluable points, his book was (naturally) written before new metal occurred; new metal does much to refute and/or qualify his points. In his introduction, Nehring outlines a popular academic thesis against which he intends to argue:

> There are actually two closely related ideas here: All expression, even the most rebellious forms, is tamed and made completely inauthentic by its 'incorporation' (sometimes 'recuperation') into multinational corporate capitalism; and, more specifically, emotion is somehow detached from any meaning or significance in the process. Any performer's emotional commitment, as a result, is either transparently phony (like [Michael] Bolton) or simply inarticulate and incoherent (like [Nirvana's Kurt] Cobain), making it impossible for anyone to take that emotion seriously and to make any commitment in return. (Nehring xi)

While Nehring argues against these ideas on behalf of truly angry music, new metal simultaneously embraces these ideas and shows deep-seated discomfort about them. Korn, Deftones, Marilyn Manson, and Rob Zombie all have web sites set up to advertise their bands and have e-mails sent—automatically to a list of addresses—which boast of "news" but which are in fact simply advertisements for merchandise, upcoming fans' choice awards (where fans phone to vote for their favourite), and other promotional miscellany. Nehring's book is useful to me as a site where intellectual analysis of rock music meets with postmodern theorizing. Examining Nehring's statements about postmodernity and rock music will allow me to illustrate the role of

postmodernity in new metal (or vice versa) and to clarify the significance of Baudrillard's concepts of simulation and advertising.

New metal is largely a phenomenon which has given up the fight against corporate capitalist domination of the popular music industry, which frankly and blatantly sells itself, and which is brutally aware of the drainage of perceived authenticity necessary for successful big business music. Still, new metal artists simultaneously express concern about these losses, as well as the loss of innocence involved, and fight for self-hood, identity, and expression within the framework of corporate capitalist music industry. This, along with the drainage of meaning in symbols, language, images, and experiences, has contributed to an intense anxiety on the part of new metal artists regarding their own identity, their ability to know the world concretely outside of themselves and spiritually know what is inside themselves, and their capacity to invest their faith in anything offered by their environment. This paradoxical quality of the postmodern hypermarket is termed by Baudrillard "implosion": "[t]he absorption of one pole into another, the short-circuiting between poles of every differential system of meaning, the erasure of distinct terms and oppositions, including that of the medium and of the real" (Baudrillard 83). Implosion caused grunge's indifference to image, fame, and money to be an image itself, and thus be equated with the things to which it was originally opposed. Nehring's statements regarding the angry popular music that preceded new metal (such as grunge and riot grrrl) and the world that surrounded that music support this idea.

Nehring argues against the postmodern idea that "holds that any expression of rebellion in contemporary culture is inauthentic, merely a pose," and that "[i]t is supposedly impossible for any emotional appeal in a commercial medium like popular music to be anything but a prostituted imposture, whether Kurt Cobain's vitriol or Michael Bolton's treacle" (x-xi). While Nehring is arguing against such a dismissal, new metal is not. New metal has internalized the idea, whether or not the concept be factually true. New metal resides in the aftermath of mass media over-saturating itself and causing information and expression to lose power because it has flooded its own market. This has resulted in what Nehring summarizes as

> ...when academics and journalists convince young people themselves that their efforts are futile, precisely what authority wants the young to believe. ... Even students with social consciences, as a result, repeatedly tell me that 'you can't change anything.' Broadcasting the postmodern belief in the futility and aimlessness of angry music, therefore, is far more insidious than the merely laughable denunciations of 'aggressive and hostile music ... by transparent idiots like the infamous Parents' Music Resource Centre (PMRC). (xii-xiii)

It is indeed far more insidious, as it is now not only the PMRCs of the world which believe in the pointlessness of musical rebellion, but new metal musicians themselves. New metal artists express their negotiation of a world in which political action in music has "imploded" into selfish, profiteering leisure, and rage has imploded into partying. It is thus that the energies of these artists have turned inward to inner spiritual turmoil, to personal troubles, to ironic social satire, and to pure escapism. Seeing that "[i]ncreasingly expensive, substanceless spectacles, posing as politics,

have effectively disenfranchised the majority of the citizenry" (Nehring xiii), it is no surprise that new metal has been topping the charts (the latter being the indicator of what the majority of the young, consuming citizenry is watching and listening to). New metal is also either increasingly expensive, substanceless spectacle (like Rob Zombie, whose budget barely breaks even on his concerts and whose lyrics are purely entertainment, and like Marilyn Manson's imagery and stage shows), or lamenting this very state of affairs (hence Chino Moreno's repeated lyric "A part of me gets *sore*! A part of me gets *sick*!" as well as—speaking of "drainage"—his well-known and anthemic lyric "Suck! Suck! Suck! Suck! Suck!"), or even trying to fight and/or escape it (as in Korn's "Freak on a Leash" and Jonathan Davis' tongue-speak).

New metal is another step along the road into postmodernity that popular rock music has been visibly taking, when examined in retrospect. Grunge evidenced vague discomfort with inauthenticity, but continued to use hegemonic languages such as guitar rock based on blues and classic rock and lyrics concerned with objectively knowable problems such as rape, drugs, love, and government. Grunge musicians showed no doubt about the value, status, and meaning of their music. Indeed they were secure in the conviction that "acerbic music has been the most conspicuous public voice of protest, almost singlehandedly keeping visions of humane social change alive in the mass media, *where fissures in corporate dominance still exist*," (Nehring xiii, emphasis mine). But now, whether they exist or not, new metal artists see no such fissures and simultaneously embrace the smooth, uncracked (but hopefully not uncrackable) surface of corporate dominance as a survival/success tactic, while doing what they can to remain their own, to keep their own language. If one does not

subscribe to the conspiracy theory of his murder, the end of grunge was pointedly marked and delineated by Kurt Cobain's suicide in 1994. It is reasonable to suspect that at least part of the reason for his suicide was that he perceived the advent of exactly what I am discussing and what new metal is negotiating, and he was ill-prepared to navigate such a state of affairs. Korn's appearance on the musical scene marked the beginning of new metal's popularity, but not its presence. The very first lyric on Korn's first album is a rising scream which introduces the first booming riff: "*Are you ready!!!*" Cobain evidently was not ready for the next step in the postmodernity of popular music and culture. As Dennis Cooper wrote in his article entitled "Grain of the Voice" (presumably an acknowledgement of the relevance of Roland Barthes' "the grain of the voice" to Cobain's brand of music and singing), published in the June 1994 issue of *Spin* magazine: "[Cobain] believed in the communicative powers of popular music, [and] showed what was possible, even in this ugly and demoralized culture" (37). New metal artists do not believe in such communicative powers, living as they do in what Greil Marcus calls "a world ruled by a language one refuses to speak" (Marcus 337). And yet they must believe, or at least desire belief, in *something*, for the only true indicator of absolute despair would be silence.

Ellen Willis wrote, in her 1995 *Village Voice* article entitled "When Bad Things Happen to Good Brains," that "[t]he problem with the Enlightenment ... was not in its belief in understanding, but its failure to understand a culture whose civilized veneer concealed mass ... frustration and rage" (8). This is a problem that has been repeated in the twentieth century. Two World Wars badly tarnished North America's

civilized self-image, and in the post-war 1950s popular culture and polite society did their best to restore that "civilized veneer," to prove to themselves that they were, indeed, quite civilized. This resulted in over-compensation, and the youth of that culture felt, as I discussed in my first chapter, oppressed, repressed, and forced into false emotion and behaviour. Also, the Wars brought about an economic boom which caused corporate capitalism to thrive, providing fertile ground for ubiquitous advertising. By targeting youth and making them feel as if they were being told what to do, this sudden surge in advertising indirectly resulted in the popularity of raucous rock and roll. Once again, with the sudden, late 1990s surge in information and optimism, Willis' complaint about the Enlightenment has become relevant. The difference is that, today, new metal artists, unlike the rock and rollers of the 1950s, have no faith in any remedy, cure, or antidote to the fragmentation, replication, and redundancy in popular culture. In arguing *against* the concepts of postmodernism which work to defuse the authenticity and power of angry music, Nehring helps to outline what it is that is driving new metal.

According to Nehring, "postmodernism fully arrived in rock and roll when punk lost its momentum around 1981, with the advent of New Pop posers ... and a new cable channel *reliant on their videos*, MTV. If punk achieved mass popularity a decade later, it did so under very different circumstances, *when 'alternative' music was well incorporated into the music industry*" (Nehring xxvi, emphasis mine). Alternative music (musical styles outside of the mainstream popular tastes) has been incorporated and has been popular for so long (at least a decade) that a new generation of popular music is rising up out of this new "incorporated alternative" ground: new metal. The

brutal failure of "Woodstock 1999" shows that this new generation knows that "As Dominic Strinati points out, ... musical authenticity has never really existed, except in mythologies about past innocence and in marketing strategies exploiting that nostalgia" (Nehring xxvi). New metal reflects a generation that sees itself inside the hegemonic discourse that exploits, and thus mocks, nostalgia, and yet positions itself outside it, fighting angrily for credit in an incredulous world.

In the perception of new metal artists and their fans, things are not as simple as they appeared to be for grunge, punk, and riot grrrl musicians. Nehring points out that "[t]he large amount of angry music at present reflects the steadily worsening situation since the original moment of punk" (xxvi) and "there has understandably been an expansion of anger in the music of the increasingly large number of economically obsolete young people" (xxvii). No longer can the young sing about peace, lament about authority, or scream about boredom—exploitation of nostalgia, ubiquity of advertising images, and the Edenesque promise of communications technology have rendered such straightforward expression impotent (hence the smiling cheers of the "fratboys" at dance clubs as they drunkenly scream along with Rage Against the Machine's Zack de la Rocha: "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!"). This generation has internalized "the view that some hopeless postmodern condition has taken hold of music—the eternal rule of multinational corporations" (Nehring xxvii), and yet continues to feel an instinctual yearning for authentic self-expression. They know that "it's all been done before," but instead of shrugging silently, they have engaged in the bizarre new qualities and fusions of new metal.

The problems which characterize postmodernism are what fuel new metal, and thus a clear understanding of the relation of postmodernism to new metal is essential. Nehring's chapter entitled "An Introduction to Postmodernism" is extremely useful for its delineations of what he sees as the arguments postmodernism uses against angry popular music, which are also delineations of what is preoccupying new metal. While not all of the aspects of his analysis are relevant to my work, I will mention a few of his points to help illustrate the relationship between postmodernity and new metal. Nehring argues that

> we need, in various forms depending on the person or groups in question, some relatively stable sense of individual and collective identity to assert against the status quo. Multiculturalism and pluralism are vital; theories of the fictionality, fragmentation, and nonexistence of identity are another matter. ... Identity politics ought to be uncoupled from the rubric of postmodernism ... Identities, however diverse, ought to be a matter of assertion, not dissolution... (Nehring 5).

Nehring reveals his affinity for older music throughout the book, writing, as he does, about punk, riot grrrls, and grunge. It is clear he has no interest in new metal, for most of the points he makes about angry music are not applicable to new metal—this is largely the defining quality of new metal. Fans and creators of new metal have no "relatively stable sense of individual and collective identity" (Nehring 5). Indeed, the "status quo" is the very condition in which reality defines itself in relation to the myriad images and ideas put forth by limitless advertising images, which include the idea of assertion against the status quo. There are no "groups" in question anymore,

every group is only defined arbitrarily through adherence to one image or another, be it a gothic/industrial image, a brand name, or a coastal hippie. Nehring points out differing types or approaches to postmodernism, noting that they all "employ a similar rhetoric in diagnosing a universal 'schizophrenia,' or delusional detachment" (Nehring 5). "Fictionality, fragmentation, and nonexistence of identity" are no longer "another matter." They are the matter. Popular culture has arrived at that very point. For new metal, identity politics are not "uncoupled from the rubric of postmodernism." Identities are at the same time infinitely diverse and completely identical and are a matter of dissolution, not assertion.

In my introductory chapter I quoted two of the three areas in which, according to Nehring, postmodernism involves development. As I have briefly stated, these qualities describe the preoccupations of new metal quite well, although it must be admitted that the words "French poststructuralist theory" and "structures of ideology and power" are not used in new metal songs. Some new metal artists take the second point to an extreme by criticizing and celebrating mass culture simultaneously. This type of internal-paradox phenomenon abounds in new metal, as it does in postmodernism. Bruce Robbins, in his "*Social Text* and Reality," published on July 8, 1996 in *In these Times*, claims that postmodern theory "gathers people and groups who are trying to deconstruct the same identities they also rely on" (29). Nehring argues that "A juggling act of this sort is plausible, although the deconstruction of identity typically becomes an end in itself at the expense of actual politics, by requiring a disabling acknowledgment of a free-floating power that supplies identities" (Nehring 7). New metal reflects a condition that exists beyond such a "juggling act," in which

the balls have been dropped. Instead of "acknowledging a free-floating power that supplies identities," new metal artists are lamenting the absence of such a power. Nehring's brief account of what differentiates the postmodern from the modernist is also helpful in outlining the preoccupations of new metal:

> These three areas [of postmodernism] do have a common denominator—a crippling loss of faith in human agents, both individuals and groups. Modernism had already grappled with alienation, or a sense of separation from others and from the possibility of fulfillment through everyday experience. Thus, modernist works of art are largely monuments to the internal processes of their individual creators, deliberately refusing any political engagement. "Post-" modernism basically means pushing modernism over the edge by giving up on the lonely individual as well as possibilities for political action: The problem is no longer alienation, but sheer fragmentation. ...self-reflexiveness, pastiche (a degraded form of montage), and indeterminacy, all reflecting a preoccupation with the weakness of the individual—occur throughout modernism. The only difference from modernism in what passes for postmodern, therefore, lies merely in the increasing extremity of descriptions of fragmentation. (Nehring 6)

The extremity of these descriptions has now, in new metal, reached the point that conventional verbal language is no longer adequate, and fragmentation must be expressed through the visual imagery which accompanies the music and through the utterances of the vocalists in the songs. While I concur with Nehring's points about the presence of these preoccupations in modernist works, I would add that such elements

were not to be found in mass culture as much as they were present in works by and for the (briefly aligning myself with Nehring's thinly-veiled contempt for dismissive academics, I choose to avoid the word "well-") much-educated and much-read. I argue that the presence of these preoccupations in some of the most "mass" of mass culture products is indicative of a significant increase in the fragmenting effects produced by the "information age." The fact that the seemingly paranoiac discomforts of the ascetic, eccentric, and "high-brow" modernists are now commonplace in chart-topping hit singles can hardly be ignored.

Nehring outlines postmodernism in order to challenge its premise, or to defend angry popular rock music against the debilitating efforts of postmodernists. Nevertheless, many of his points about postmodernism, in direct opposition to the punk and riot grrrl music he defends, are accurate descriptions of new metal. New metal does not present the fight-back, stay-strong, unifying tendencies which Nehring sees in "music conveying both discontent and a concern with renewing common feeling" (Nehring xxiii). Instead, new metal is caught up in the postmodern condition Nehring argues angry music is created to resist. There is no unity, no corralled energy, no target of discontent for new metal. But new metal is angry. There is rage, discontent, and emotion. While the music is postmodern, it does not succumb to the intellectual futility described by Nehring. This postmodern age has convinced the new metal generation that, as Nehring describes, anger is futile. They have internalized this belief, and yet continue to find themselves angry. Convinced that expression of their undeniable emotion will now be nothing but a self-mockery, new metal artists are striving to find a way which is acceptable to themselves to express their discontent

with the prevailing conditions of their culture. While they continue to rage against machines such as religious and parental oppression and dismissal, they now must also rage against the absence of their own machines to use for such raging.

Despite his contradictory position towards the postmodern thesis about popular music, Nehring discusses, in the context of supporting feminist arguments, one point which is invaluable to a comprehension of new metal. Post-Enlightenment culture has dismissed anger as an emotion, which is of the *body*, and is in opposition to reason, which is of the *mind*, concluding that anger is meaningless (and feminine—read "weak"). Feminists and women in rock have endeavoured to erase the separation between body and mind in order to reassert the power and meaning of emotion. This is precisely what new metal artists, perhaps without as much conscious or focussed intent, are doing.

New metal places a lot of emphasis on the body. Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Rob Zombie are very rhythmic and oriented towards dancing and moving the body, Deftones' Chino Moreno has a very physical, corporeal vocal style, and Marilyn Manson's imagery focuses almost exclusively on things that they do to their bodies. This is where new metal is similar to grunge, punk, and riot grrrl music, but in a different way, for

> [t]he postmodern thesis that emotion has become disconnected from ideology (or reason) is entirely undermined if feminist philosophy is right in arguing that emotions are rational judgements formed out of social interaction (and thus educable in both good and bad directions), that physical sensations are just

> as important as verbal articulation in those judgements, and that anger is the 'essential political emotion'. (Nehring 107)

Theorists from Enlightenment to Modernism have associated emotion with the unconscious, with instinct, with ferality and barbarism, and with animals. Angry popular music, and the women involved in it, have refuted that, asserting that leaving emotion out of cognition and judgement is an entirely erroneous process, for "[e]motion, properly understood, is the whole works involved in evaluating a situation: our cognitive appraisal of it, our physical feelings about it, and our subsequent choices in expressing our approval or disapproval and acting on it" (Nehring 108). Grunge, punk, riot grrrl, and other visibly angry forms of music have been criticized for being unintelligible, inarticulate, and for being a mere saleable pose. This music has operated by stretching the bounds of established language, but still by remaining within it. Screams have always been, in charting-topping singles and records, distortions of words, drawing out the endings of words, or simple yells that sound like the singer is at a loss for words. Since

> any words you could use to condemn [societal wrongs] have already been taken and twisted, the only thing left for any sensible person to do is *scream*, which is exactly what a lot of young people are doing. They're not worrying about a 'message', which fascists like Gingrich and Limbaugh, given the absence of anyone in the government or news media who will contradict them, would just spin into a soundbite. (Nehring 154)

And while "[p]ure screaming is what grunge, hip-hop, metal, punk, and Riot Grrrls have in common" (Nehring 154), new metal artists have gone beyond pure screaming,

for screaming is no longer pure. It is tainted with the benign-ness of people who have enjoyed listening to it on top 40 radio. All that Nehring writes about "words you could use to condemn" is now true of "pure screaming" as well. Kim Gordon, of Sonic Youth (a very angry band), was quoted (by Kim France in her article for the September/October 1992 *Utne Reader*, entitled "Angry Young Women") as saying, "Screaming is a kind of vehicle for expressing yourself in ways society doesn't let you" (24). Now, the loss for words has reached the point at which the loss itself is a word. It is not just a word, but word-terrain occupied now by over-popularized music. Now, the hypermarket has made screaming into an information, and "[r]ather than creating communication, [communication] *exhausts itself in the act of staging communication*. Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning" (Baudrillard 80). The same forces that took words of condemnation away from angry musicians have taken away the non-words of outrage. Screaming for lack of anything else to say has now been packaged and sold (and consumed by dance-club fratboys); this sheds light on the vocal techniques of Jonathan Davis, which seem to create an entirely new language, known only to himself (it is not likely that drunken fratboys can emulate Davis' vocals). The creation of new pseudo-languages in angry popular music makes it more apparent that "a recognition of the intelligence of emotions is needed in popular music criticism as well as in academic work" (Nehring 109).

My intention in examining this particular similarity between new metal and past angry music is hardly to show that new metal is not very new after all. I have already shown what makes new metal new, and will proceed to demonstrate that new

metal is indeed authentically angry—even if new metal artists are unsure why they are angry and even if they participate in the discourse of the hegemonic forces with which they may be angry—as well as to explain the dance/body inclination of the music, hitherto unknown in angry music. New metal musicians appear acutely aware of their own sensation that possibilities open to them for honestly expressing themselves are increasingly few. This is why they have pushed "indecipherable" expression even further than their predecessors. Earlier angry music screamed; new metal babbles and dances.

If language (and thus reason) has been entirely occupied and drained of tangible meaning by the music industry, angry music must, in order to continue expressing itself credibly, move along the Cartesian body-mind axis towards territory which remains unclaimed by a meaning-draining market. That territory is the body. Simple images of the body have, of course, been the property of advertising forces for decades, and thus earlier angry music was adamantly opposed to a strong focus on body image. New metal occupies the ground of the body by fusing dancing body movement with angry music (like Limp Bizkit and Korn), by injecting more of the body into the sound of the music and the vocal performance (like Deftones), and by pushing images of the body into new extremes (Rob Zombie and Marilyn Manson). The opposing poles of body and mind and are connected by emotion, and "[a]s opposed to choosing between either the body or the intellect in our approaches to popular music, therefore, we need instead 'a full understanding of the way emotion can act as a mediator between reason and desire,' as Peter Middleton puts it" (Nehring 127). If there is a straight line drawn between the concepts of mind and body, with

emotion in the middle, angry popular music before new metal stayed primarily slightly to the body side of emotion. New metal is much farther towards the body pole. Given that popular music has moved its emphasis from intellect to emotion (not just in lyrical content, which has always been supposedly "emotional," but in sound, texture, style, etc. as well), new metal's assuming of a place near to the body pole of such an axis is indicative of further socio-cultural movement towards the anxieties expressed by postmodernism. This reveals the importance of the link I have drawn—using the body-mind axis—between grunge, riot grrrl, and punk, on one hand, and new metal, on the other. Earlier angry music shares with new metal an emotive, corporeal sound and style, but is more rational (i.e. grounded in prior language and semantic systems) than new metal. This is apparent in "an objection frequently raised against Nirvana, in particular: that one can't hear the lyrics" (Nehring 124). This complaint relies on the idea that there are comprehensible, English-language lyrics to be understood underneath the screaming and distortion. In the case of Jonathan Davis, the incomprehensible lyrics are perfectly clear; they are simply not in English, nor do they belong to a language system designed like any conventional language intended to be understood. Jonathan Davis speaks words that are meaningless, because the potency of Kurt Cobain's indecipherability has been defused. He thus cleans up the precision of his utterance, but completely erases its relation to known systems of language. Other new metal vocalists do not go this far, especially Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie, who remain primarily within decipherable language. Still, Deftones' Chino Moreno and Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst, as well as Jonathan Davis, increase the ferality of their performance by using emotive elements such as squeals, moans, whimpers, sobs, and

bodily elements such as pants, snarls, and sounds of the throat, teeth, tongue, and lips. Here, "[t]he body in the voice, or embodied voice, is celebrated for exceeding rational meaning through a tactile 'grain' and *jouissance* (in Roland Barthes' terms) or a corporeal *signifiance* (as Julia Kristeva puts it)" (Nehring 131). These elements make the music far less rational-sounding than previous emotive angry music, and are indicative of an increased confusion induced by postmodernity.

By being even more corporeal and less rational than older angry music, new metal has taken up a position which is strongly bound up in the body. New metal artists are involving the human body in their work in ways which angry music has never previously done. Now it appears that angry music can provoke dancing. "Head-banging," the movement provoked by previous styles of metal, for instance, lacks the coordination and the bodily comprehensiveness of dance. While new metal does not rely on choreographed dance to the degree of The Backstreet Boys, bands like Limp Bizkit have been known to feature breakdancing (a highly coordinated style of dancing originated in the 1980s with hiphop and rap music) on their stages. The reason for this originates in the struggle for that elusive treasure: authenticity. The idea of keeping the body foreign, of not being "in tune" with it, and of paying it little attention and leaving it to its own devices is now old and marketed. The unkempt, sound-is-more-important-than-look idea has been in vogue in angry music since punks took the time to spike their hair. Attention to one's appearance—whether to guide it towards the acceptable fashion trends or away from them—and attention to how one's body moved was relegated to hegemonic music. Now, *in*attention to such things has also become

property of saleable musical commodity, and angry popular musicians are looking for an approach to their bodies which they can accept as solely their own.

The idea of words and the concept of language have been occupied by forces which make them meaningless. The same is now true of non-words, such as screams. Indeed, the very idea of voice is now being questioned by new metal music. The body is a strong presence in new metal music and imagery because

> the old 'voices of the body' are now 'always determined by a system,' leaving only 'contextless voice-gaps' that indicate the body's absence from discourse. Thus the 'voice of the people' has been utterly fragmented into 'aphasic enunciation [of] bits of language.' That aphasia, or the loss of the power to use words, results from the voice somehow being universally 'cleaned up' by the various techniques of sound reproduction... (Nehring 130, quoting Michel de Certeau)

Now new metal artists are seen wearing athletic gear, braiding their hair, "dreadlocking" their hair Jamaican-style, breakdancing, hiphop dancing, singing about the body, and using such lyrics as "come dance with me." Fewer possibilities offered by the body have been closed off by market/advertising money-generating forces than those available in spoken language and the voice. New metal presents bizarre combinations of hegemonic elements such as dance, techno, and dress with formerly underground/alternative elements such as "grainy" utterance, dissonance, profanity, sheer volume, and the grotesque in order to create new semantic ground unclaimed by inauthentic, profit-motivated forces. But a deeper paradox remains: being averse to profit in music is now a pose located in the infinite lexicon of media images which are

quick to appropriate any form of expression. New metal musicians are perhaps the first popular musical generation to be forced to acknowledge this phenomenon. Consequently new metal artists are doubling back semantically, and fusing counter-cultural elements with elements of pure hegemony. Kurt Cobain's music and identity was overtaken by this process, and his resistance appears to have killed him. Now new metal artists simply embrace the process while remaining anxious about the loss of authenticity. This seemingly infinite unfolding of paradoxes is like two mirrors facing each other, and new metal artists are caught in the middle, each taking their own approach to addressing the predicament in which they find themselves.

Chapter III

Numb by Painters: Close Examination of New Metal as Text

Many elements of new metal are shared by other kinds of contemporary popular music, or by past popular music. It is not my intention to prove the freshness, novelty, or uniqueness of new metal. Still, there is a common thread running through the sound of the new metal I have chosen to examine: a frenetic, dissonant, rhythmic sound hitherto absent at the top of popularity charts. These artists all combine violent imagery and angry expression with a rhythm-oriented style suitable for dancing. Also, the lyrics exhibit a paradoxical combination of rage and weakness, of bravado and paranoia. Here I would like to focus on the primary material itself and bring to light the specific details that make the music noteworthy.

One of the most prevalent elements of new metal is doubt. The artists doubt themselves, doubt others, and doubt the reality that surrounds them. While heavy metal has, in the past, been typically macho, boastful, and self-assured, there have been exceptions, such as "Paranoid" by the progenitors of metal, Black Sabbath. Still, no heavy metal has been as paranoid as new metal. The lyrics about self-doubt and self-loathing are startlingly plentiful. The first song on Korn's first album is entitled "Blind" and contains the lyrics

Deeper and deeper and deeper as I journey to
living a life that seems to be a lost reality
that I could never find a way to reach my inner self
esteem is low, how deep can I go,

in the ground that I lay, if I don't find a way to

sift through the gray that clouds my mind.

This time I look to see what's between the lines!

This is an excellent example of the range of doubts informing new metal lyrics. In this excerpt, Jonathan Davis shows doubt about the "reality" of his own life, a lack of faith in his ability to "reach his inner self," and a suspicion about the surfaces of his perceptions, bringing about a need to "look to see what's between the lines." The song ends with the repeated line "I can see, I can see, I'm going blind." In a change from most angry music, Davis is not accusing others of being blind, but is lamenting his own blindness. In "Need To," Davis sings "I am confused, fighting myself ... Outside I know you, but inside, I'm fucked ... Why do I cry? Why do I really need to?" Perhaps the most striking example of Davis' self-doubt is found in "Faget," in which he repeats "All my life, who am I?," then sings "I'm just a faget! ... I'm not a faget! Or am I?" On Korn's second album a song entitled "Lost"—the title already indicates the confusion that plagues the lyricist—contains the lyrics "Why can't I decide why my feelings I hide? Always screwing with my mind, a thorn in my spine," which demonstrate a sense of paralysis. On "Ass Itch" Davis sings "I hate writing shit, it is so stupid, what's my problem today? Maybe I'm depressed, maybe I'm helpless to what comes out my hand," (today's urban slang often drops the word "of") further indicating the artist's feeling of helplessness and lack of control over himself.

In the case of Deftones, lyricist/vocalist Chino Moreno's lyrics are much more fragmented. Examples of lyrics concerning self-loathing and self-doubt include "I am a fucking monster, I will never get what I want ... A part of me gets *sick*, a part of me

gets *sore*" (from "Lifter"), "We start to cry, just because I'm really poor, living in me is so poor" ("Root"), and "I've been humming too many words, got a weak self-esteem that's been stomped away from every single dream" ("7 Words"). Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst exhibits some of the same self-doubt, although his angst is often more outwardly projected. In "Nobody Loves Me" he sings "Through my lyrics I'll show ya, the sanity's over, 'cause people say I'm bugged out ... it's all those people attacking my identity ... I'm running nowhere ... Life seems so meaningless." An untitled, unlisted track contains the lyrics "Am I a freak in the darkness, or am I a misfit?" and in "Everything" Durst sings "I'm so frustrated, some things are making me so sick inside, ... I'm just not good enough for you, let's change, let's be something everybody else is, so much bullshit built up inside, it's fucking ridiculous, I don't know if I should freak the fuck out on you or just sit back and laugh." On Limp Bizkit's second album, Durst sings "Lately I've been skeptical, silent when I would used to speak. Distant from all around me, witness me fail and become weak. Life is overwhelming, heavy is the head that wears the crown" (in the song "Rearranged") and "Maybe there's more to life than it seems, I'm constantly running from reality and chasing dreams" (in "Don't Go Off Wandering").

A prominent manifestation of new metal's all-consuming doubt is its sense of "homelessness." Having internalized a suspicion of absolutely everything because of the ubiquity of simulacra, new metal artists have no solid philosophical, political, or even personal base on which to rest their work or beliefs. Since it appears to them that nothing is entirely real, they cannot put their trust in anything. New metal artists express a feeling of being simultaneously trapped and groundless, confined and

exposed. Marilyn Manson expresses new metal's incapacity for faith succinctly in their song "Rock is Dead": "Rock is deader than dead, shock is all in your head. Your sex and your dope is all that we're fed, so fuck all your protests and put them to bed ... we're so full of hope and so full of shit, build a new god to medicate and to ape, sell us ersatz dressed up and real, fake anything to belong." The song suggests that both optimism ("so full of hope") and pessimism ("rock is deader than dead") are meaningless now. The album "Mechanical Animals" is replete with laments about the emptiness of a world without foundation. In "I Want to Disappear," Marilyn Manson sings "Look at me now, got no religion ... our mommies are lost now, daddy's someone else ... I was a nihilist and now today I'm just too fucking bored, by the time I'm old enough I won't know anything at all." Other noteworthy lyrics include "They love you when you're on all the covers, when you're not, they love another" (from "The Dope Show"), "we're quitters and we're sober, our confessions will be televised," ("I Don't Like the Drugs [But the Drugs Like Me]"), "I can tell you what they say in space, that our earth is too gray, but when the spirit is so digital the body acts this way" ("Disassociative"), and "I crack and split my xerox hands" ("The Last Day on Earth"). One of the best examples of Marilyn Manson's lack of faith in absolutely anything is their song "1996":

Anti Choice, anti Girl, I am the anti flag unfurled.

Anti white and anti man, I got the anti-future plan.

Anti fascist, anti mod, I am the anti-music god.

Anti sober, anti whore, there will never be enough of anti more.

I can't believe in the things that believe in me. Now it's your turn to see misanthropy.

Anti people, now you've gone too far. Here's your antichrist superstar.

Anti money, anti hate, anti things I fucked and ate.

Anti cop anti fun, here is my anti president gun.

Anti Satan, anti black, anti world is on my back.

Anti gay and anti dope, I am the faggot anti pope ...

Anti peace, anti life, anti husband, anti wife.

Anti song and anti me, I don't deserve a chance to be.

While almost all of Marilyn Manson's lyrics deal with a lack of anything to believe in, they are more frequently political and concerned with the state of the world than with the condition of the lyricist's own soul. Other bands, like Korn and Deftones, deal more with personal turmoil, but still express feelings of being homeless, groundless, trapped, and deprived of personal choices. In "Predictable," Jonathan Davis sings "For you to see that I can't speak what's on my mind, it runs away, it's so predictable ... Another day, silence overwhelms my mind. ... I can never break free." Davis' sense of being unable to diagnose the source of his own turmoil as well as being unable to ease that turmoil is evident in songs like "Helmet in the Bush," in which he sings "Days keep passing, one notch at a time. I don't feel right. Please God let me sleep tonight. Every day confronted, fuck off, it's giving in. I just want to know why. ... Want to give it up but I can't escape." This incomprehensible fear verging on madness is made clearer in Korn's second album. In "Swallow" Davis sings "Always, I'm locked in my head, no pain? ... It came unknown to me. Paranoid it's controlling all of me." In "No Place to Hide" he sings "I have no place to run and hide," and in "Ass Itch" he sings "Why do I feel this way? ... Set me free, just set me free." The feeling of "blindness"

towards what is plaguing the lyricist, born in "Blind"—the first song of Korn's first album—comes to a peak on their third album in their most popular and successful single to date, entitled "Freak on a Leash," with the lyrics "Something takes a part of me. Something lost and never seen. Every time I start to believe, something's raped and taken from me ... Sometimes I cannot take this place, sometimes it's my life I can't taste. Sometimes I cannot feel my face. ... Feeling like a freak on a leash, feeling like I have no release. How many times have I felt diseased? Nothing in my life is free."

Deftones lyricist Chino Moreno expresses, in a different fashion, a feeling of having no solid basis for identity or existence. One element that recurs in his lyrics is boredom, which seems to be caused by a perceived lack of anything worth doing that won't prove futile or destructive. Such lyrics include "I get bored, I get bored, I get bored, I wish for a real one," from "Bored," "Let me go, I get bored," from "Minus Blindfold," "You're plain boring and you bore me asleep," from "Lotion," and "Dying of boredom, I'll try it all," from "Lhabia." Other lyrics show Moreno being let down by things in which he may previously have invested his faith. In "Around the Fur," Moreno suggests that the popular culture created by mass communications technology is empty and meaningless: "Hey vanity, this vial is empty and so are you. Hey glamorous, this vial is not God anymore. Speak! I don't get it, should I ignore the fashion or go by [buy?] the book? I don't want it, I just want your eyes fixated on me." The same suggestion is made in "Lotion," when Moreno sings "The style is crumbling, covered, canned, it was sick ... it's classical anyways, and how cool are you?" In other songs, Moreno dreams of escaping the empty prison which he has painted his environment to be. In "Rickets," his lyrics seem to complement Baudrillard's assertion

that "[w]e live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning" (79) by expressing a desire to block out the surplus of information in today's culture: "I think too much ... I don't even care ... I don't want to listen ... If it was mine to say I, wouldn't say it, and if it was mine to say I wouldn't speak." In "Lotion" Moreno comments on the popular culture's process of assimilation to which he sees those around him falling prey: "it's making sick sense, seeing how you're sticking out, hardly and hoping money. Please arise up off the fucking knees and hop off the train for a second and try to find your own fucking heart." In other songs Moreno fantasizes about his own personal flight or reclusion from the situation he perceives; in "Be Quiet and Drive (Far Away)" he sings "Now drive me far away, I don't care where, just far away," and in "My Own Summer (Shove it)" he sings "Cloud come and shove the sun aside ... There are no crowds in the streets and no sun in my own summer. The shade is a tool, a device, a saviour. See I try to look up to the sky but my eyes burn."

One of new metal's most prominent elements is the discarding/transcendence/ reconfiguring of language. Some songs feature gibberish and nonsense language, others contain repetition of words, and others use an excess of profanity and/or emotion. These techniques are directly related to the sense of homelessness and entrapment expressed by the artists. The vocalists seem to feel that they have no language of their own over which they are master, and, simultaneously, feel that they are being forced into over-exposure to and/or usage of the languages of the forces that have robbed them of their philosophical/spiritual home. They use language in their own ways to push against the semantic walls that are imprisoning them. The most striking example of this is Jonathan Davis' nonsense-utterance. This technique can be

found on their first three albums, in songs like "Ball Tongue," "Twist," "Freak on a Leash," "B.B.K.," and "Seed." The strongest example is "Twist," in which the only known-language lyric is the word "twist." Davis delivers this word on its own between nonsense "verses," and it implies that he is using his own language because any utterance he makes in any language known to anyone else will be "twisted" into something different from his original intention. The best-known example of this technique is found in Korn's most popular song, "Freak on a Leash." In this song, fragments of English-language words can be detected, or at least perceived, such as "boy," "something" or "some things," and "they," in the midst of Davis' intentional gibberish. By effectively "speaking in tongues," Davis is giving voice to his feral, unassimilated soul which has resisted being shaped or conditioned by others' utterances. This also results in most other people being unable to reproduce what he is uttering, and thus being unable to "twist" his "words" back against him.

A striking example of a different way that Davis uses language self-reflexively to highlight the absence of meaning in today's accepted lexicons is found in "K@#Ø%!" The verse lyrics are simply strings of meaningless, hyper-offensive, degrading sexual profanity, so crude that even I am reluctant to cite them in print. The chorus lyrics offer the meta-lingual counterpoint: "I don't know what to say, so what? Don't give up on me now." This song is similar to Marilyn Manson's imagery in that it is intentionally "over-the-top" with the intention of demonstrating that anything short of pronunciations of this nature has ceased to draw anyone's attention. "K@#Ø%!" also has a personal dimension: Davis appears to be asking for forgiveness about his

own state of mind and behaviour, pleading that he feels forced to speak in such a manner in order to speak his own language and to have an audience.

Other techniques of lingual/linguistic excess are used by Deftones' Chino Moreno and by Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst. The most salient example of such performance by Moreno is one I have discussed already, found in "7 Words." Moreno screams "Suck! Suck! Suck! Suck! Suck!" repeatedly. His choice of word is significant, for he repeats the word until all meaning has been "sucked" out of it. At the end of Limp Bizkit's "Pollution," as the instruments stop playing, Fred Durst is screaming monosyllables. When the music finally stops, Durst continues to scream "BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BRING! THAT! FUCKING! BEAT! BACK! BACK! YOU SUCKER! FUCKING SUCKER!" until a bandmate intercedes, yelling "Fred, shut up, alright? This is me telling you to shut up! Shut up! Shut— FRED, SHUT THE FUCK UP!" The manner in which Durst's screaming continues beyond the end of the song, and actually works against the song as his band mate must silence him, illustrates the paradox inherent in the use of linguistic excess by new metal vocalists. Out of a desire to break free of the bonds of languages which new metal vocalists feel are assimilating them, they strive to use their own languages or use language in their own way. "Pollution" demonstrates that, despite helping to create a sense of originality and authenticity, these efforts produce utterances that forge no meaningful connection with their surroundings. Moreover, at times they produce utterances that others do not want to hear. This contradiction causes further unresolvable confusion and angst which overflow into the musician's vocal delivery and push at the seams of the songs themselves.

Another characteristic trait shared by Korn, Deftones, and Limp Bizkit is a highly emotive style of vocal delivery. If the vocalist is not consumed by a chaotic rage, he is often overwhelmed with sadness. Frequently, though, anger and sadness are combined in the songs and singing. For Deftones, examples of particularly emotive vocal delivery include the end of "Be Quiet and Drive (Far Away)," in which Chino Moreno repeats "I don't care where, just far," and the verses at the end of "Mascara," which includes the lyrics "I hate your tatoos, your weak wrists, but I'll keep you." In both of these songs Moreno makes no attempt to counteract the impression that he is overcome with sadness, and his emotive performance is a part of the fabric of the music. Some of Fred Durst's most notably emotive performances in Limp Bizkit include the chorus of "Nobody Loves Me," in which he alternates an angry "Nobody loves me!" with a sad, pathetic "Nobody cares" and "Nobody owes me a thing." "Stalemate" is also a noteworthy example of Durst's highly emotional performance, when he sings "I can't believe you had me strung out over you like that," and "I'm gonna get mine." Durst's style sounds more emotionally unstable, more on the verge of a psychological breakdown, and conveys more strongly the bewildered confusion faced by new metal artists than most rock vocalists. Korn's Jonathan Davis has the most emotionally unstable, slightly psychotic vocal style. It is apparent in "Mr. Rogers" as he laments the loss of his innocence upon realizing that the optimistic promises of a childhood icon were not to be fulfilled, in the verses and ending of "Kill you" in which he condemns a stepmother for treating him poorly, and in "Good God" in which he expresses the pain of rejection. The important thing to note about these songs and the emotive vocal style of new metal in general is that the emotion

expressed in the lyrics is not confined only to the signs that are the words, but it overflows into the very utterance of those words, into the very essence, delivery, and manifestation of those words. The emotional state of the song is part of the defining aural texture of the music as well as part of the message of the lyrics. According to these musicians, it is no longer unseemly or unmanly to "let them see you cry," so to speak. In fact, the very physical, manifested emotion of the song is not confined to the semantic borders of the "songs."

While extra-textual recording (recorded sound that is not part of the "song") is not new to popular music, the intensity and type of the extra-song sound presented by some new metal has never before been heard from chart-topping artists. On Limp Bizkit's album "Three Dollar bill, Y'all," the song "Nobody Loves Me" begins with someone yelling, with no music, "Shut Up!" followed by the music. The same is true of the song which immediately follows "Nobody Loves Me" on the album, "Sour," except that someone yells "Mellow out!" Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Deftones have all included, on their most recent albums, "hidden tracks," which are unlisted recorded tracks, usually found at the end of the album and which feature people, presumably band members, talking. On Korn's "Follow the Leader" and Deftones' "Around the Fur" the band members are speaking candidly, without directly acknowledging the fact that they are being recorded. On Limp Bizkit's "Significant Other," the speakers are addressing the listener over background beats. These extra-textual recorded elements call into question the boundaries of the text and the definition of "text," in terms of the "text" that the song is ("Significant Other" less so than the others). They bring about such considerations as: are these recordings part of the "album"? If they are, what role

and purpose do they play? How are they to be interpreted? If not, why were they included? It is not my intention to answer these questions, nor do they need to be answered. If these recordings are part of the text, and not marginalia, appendices, or other such add-ons, then they force the listener to ponder the textual status of other, if not all, expressions, utterances, speech, creation, or even objects in daily life. If a recording of intoxicated men discussing the origin of Korn's technician's nickname is part of the collection of work that is "Follow the Leader," then perhaps television advertisements for "Follow the Leader" are part of Korn's opus as well. E-mails to fan lists, interviews, telephone calls, and virtually everything else may be considered works of art. The boundaries between everyday experience and artistic expression become blurred, and both are recontextualized. If fans see musicians like Korn as icons, role models, or heroes who reside outside or above the realm of everyday experience, these hidden tracks work against that perception. These tracks, being unlisted and not on "the menu" that is the track listing on the back of the cd package, are not being sold. The motivation for the inclusion of these hidden tracks could thus be something other than selling. They remain the band's own "language," bearing no relation to marketing, and acting as a "true" reflection of the experience of the musicians.

This idea ultimately returns to one of new metal's central preoccupations: what is real? If an authentic expression is one which reflects purely and solely the thoughts and feelings of the speaker/creator without being tailored, shaped, or truncated by the demands and expectations of others, and if a work of art is created self-consciously and with a consciousness of the fact that other people will experience the work, then to

what degree is that work of art "authentic?" If hidden tracks are "textual," i.e., a part of the work of art, then anything else may be considered a work of art. Thus anything may be considered to be not a "true" authentic expression, for, in today's mass-media saturated society, almost everything is being recorded and/or witnessed by someone else. New metal's extra-textual recordings call into question the authentic status of all information and expression, for, in Baudrillard's hyperrreality, it is unclear, even to the speaker/transmitter, whether any given utterance/creation is performed with a consciousness of other people's experience of it.

One of the most striking examples of extra-textual recording by these artists is Korn's "Daddy." The lyrics of "Daddy" are about a child being sexually abused by his or her father, and about the child's mother knowing about it but not acting to stop it. Naturally, Jonathan Davis' vocal performance in this song is characterized by a high level of emotion. But what is particularly notable about this song is that by the song's end Davis has become so overcome with emotion that he is sobbing and shrieking violently and uncontrollably. This goes on for some time over the music that finishes the song. At this point Davis' sobs could still be argued to be part of the song's performance, although it is extremely unconventional and unsettling because it does not sound like a performance. The instruments gradually drop out of the recording and Davis' sobs are left accompanied only by a woman singing gently and softly. The instruments begin playing sparsely in what sounds like an improvised manner. At the end of the recording, the sound of a door opening is heard, followed by a footstep. This recording makes the listener wonder if it was planned to be recorded this way. If so, why did the musicians want to record such a track? But if it wasn't planned the

listener wonders why Korn decided not to stop recording when the song ended and Davis continued to cry aloud, and whether Davis knew he would be so affected, or if his behaviour was not genuine, but forced as part of the "text" of the song when it was written. If it was "genuine," then one wonders why he did not leave the recording booth, have the tape stopped, or end the recording sooner in the final cut. This extremely unconventional recording pushes the boundaries of textuality and of authenticity. Few artists have included such a demonstration of the vocalist's emotional response toward his or her own material. To include this response is to redefine the nature of "text" and "song" to mean "slice of life" or a documentary. The song answers differently than most songs the question of how the presence of a recording device affects what it is recording. Now emotions are on display. At the planned, "artificial" pole of the genuine/affected possibility of this track, this recording at least blurs the line between music and drama, as many recordings in the past have done. At the other pole, though, this recording questions that which is not performance. With the omnipresence of recording and broadcasting in today's world and society's saturation with "candid" recordings of people from around the world, daily life is more than ever hospitable to the sensation of being watched by an omnipresent, Orwellian "Big Brother." New metal expresses the sensation that if everywhere, all the time, we are being recorded, then perhaps we are acting all the time, and indirectly suggests that if we are always acting, then we may have no authentic identity left. New metal is plagued with the possibility that today's individuals possess no traits that are not a result of other people's expectations. These insights help us understand why so many of Jonathan Davis' lyrics concern his

inability to know and understand himself and illustrate the experience of those engaged with today's popular media culture. "Daddy" may represent a desire to inject authenticity into the new virtual world of ubiquitous information and may simultaneously already be inauthentic, the result of a guided, conscious decision to record and sell something. Here appears a paradox which drives new metal: authentic identity is becoming increasingly difficult to negotiate. Even if "Daddy" is simply a badge made by Korn to prove their own authenticity, it is a failed, bogus badge, for it is created for consumption by others. By materializing the question of the nature of text, Korn have embodied new metal's struggle to find authenticity and identity in a world characterized by doubt. As such they have personified Baudrillard's hyper-reality.

In opposition to Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Deftones, Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie use irony, satire, and parody in their music, imagery, and personae to address the same question of elusive authenticity. Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie devote much attention to spectacle. One complaint directed against Marilyn Manson is they are not original and that they have borrowed all of their imagery and characterization from past rock stars. On "Antichrist Superstar" they adopt a ghoulish, Satanic pose, which many claim was first adopted by Alice Cooper and/or Black Sabbath's Ozzy Osbourne. On "Mechanical Animals" the band's image is futuristic, glossy, androgynous, and glam-oriented—an image which many claim is stolen from David Bowie. It is not my intention to discuss the accuracy of these claims. Marilyn Manson does differ from these past musicians in the amount of energy the band puts into their image. On their Antichrist Superstar tour, Marilyn Manson tore up Bibles and cut

himself open to induce bleeding as part of the show, and their make-up has always been hyperbolically bizarre. It is claimed that their ultimate aim is to make money. It is arguable that Marilyn Manson revel in the affectedness of their poses in order to parody the idea of rock celebrities and to illustrate the irrelevance of the question of authenticity in today's information-accelerated society. By blatantly posing and radically changing their image, Marilyn Manson ask if it is possible to be authentic and if authenticity really matters. Marilyn Manson's frequent use of parody further supports this argument. At one point in their Antichrist Superstar show, they parodied a Nazi rally by erecting a giant podium onstage and unfurling huge flags bearing their current insignia. In a red suit and tie, Marilyn Manson (the vocalist) used stylized and jerky body language to suggest a marionette being controlled by a larger being above him. One of the band's music videos was directed to re-make/parody the John. F. Kennedy assassination. They frequently target rock stars and their fans with satire. Their song "Mister Superstar," the lyrics of which I quoted in the first chapter, and their song "Rock is Dead," which I quoted earlier in this chapter, mock celebrities and those who idolize them.

They ridicule the more general industry surrounding celebrity in "New Model No. 15" with the lyrics "I'm Spun and I know that I'm Stoned and Rolling" (references to music celebrity magazines), and "Lifelike and posable, hopeless and disposable ... You're like a VCR, stick something in to know just who you are," in "The Dope Show" with the lyrics "All the pretty, pretty ones will leave you low and blow your mind ... We really love your face, we'd really like to sell you. The cops and the queers make good-looking models," and in "Little Horn" with "The world spreads its legs for

another star, the world shows its face for another scar." Also, the song "Deformography" includes the lyrics "You will be deformed in your porn. You're such a dirty, dirty rock star," and "Angel with the Scabbed Wings" includes "He will deflower the freshest crop, dry up all the wombs with his rock and roll sores." All of these lyrics demonstrate the meta-celebrity quality of Marilyn Manson's music and image. They appear to be pointing out that, in today's media-saturated hyper-reality, celebrities come and go so quickly and become famous for such banal reasons that the very idea of celebrity is actually common place and unspectacular—the very opposite of what celebrities stand for. They even target themselves with "Cake on some more make-up to cover all those lines," in "Dried Up, Tied Up, and Dead to the World." Marilyn Manson draw attention to many of the same authenticity issues addressed by Korn, Deftones, and Limp Bizkit, but employ a satirical, sarcastic approach.

Rob Zombie differs from the other new metal artists I've examined in that his lyrics are purely escapist entertainment—mostly Halloween-inspired poems and chants consisting of sex, violence, and freakish monsters. His circus-act rock music is not particularly striking, but his onstage persona and his lyrical and extra-musical imagery (album sleeves, stage sets, costumes, etc.) consist of recycled styles, ideas, and images. Rob Zombie is illustrative of the same problems inherent in the postmodern, simulacra-infested condition expressed by other new metal artists, but he negotiates them by creating purely escapist, fictional realms. A review of his album, *Hellbilly Deluxe*, states that "*Hellbilly Deluxe* is an excessively heavy..., meticulously produced piece of parodic gore-flick metal. The kind of stuff that would be proud to call itself crap with a capital C. ...there are times when this sort of B-movie shtick

seems positively old-fashioned (Black Sabbath 1970, Misfits 1982, ..." (http://www.launch.com). In an interview (taken from the same website), Rob Zombie says, "It's my job to entertain the kids—it's not about my personal private journey. You're supposed to keep that stuff inside and let it eat away at you, instead of bringing it onstage" (www.launch.com). In an interview with Greg Kot he expresses disdain for the angst-ridden, anti-spectacle approach of grunge, but he does not abandon authenticity. In response to Kot's "So why do it?" (reagrding the small chance of profit in his shows) he explains that everything his fans see and hear comes from inside him. Instead of delivering hyper-emotional laments about personal pain and confusion like other new metal artists, he resides inside his own entirely constructed world in which all is how he wants it and where he "prowls a skull-infested stage like a postmodern Fagin" (Kot http://www.cdnow.com). This world is built of popular-cultural detritus shared by his many fans. In response to a potentially confusing information-saturated environment, Rob Zombie resurrects elements from popular culture into which he escapes. Rob Zombie embraces the swirling images and identities which other new metal artists resist and satirize. He does not exhibit the psychosis apparent in Jonathan Davis' quest for novelty and original creation, or the manic depressive delirious laughter implied by Marilyn Manson. Through all of his outlandish and banal colours, pictures, and words, Rob Zombie reflects, in a different light, the same postmodern problems reflected by other new metal artists, but shows that there are as many routes of negotiation as there are problems deciphering today's information bombardment.

Conclusion

Steel Mirrors: New Metal and Other Works in Popular Culture

Not all of the elements I have identified in new metal are new to music. In fact, most of the individual qualities have been written, recorded, and/or performed in underground, experimental, independent, and alternative music, or in music from outside North America. Jazz music has employed the "scat" technique for years, hidden tracks are not unique to new metal, and lyrics plagued with doubt can be found in many types of alternative music, such as goth and industrial. What is new about new metal's use of all of the elements I have discussed is new metal's astronomical popularity. Korn organized and executed one of 1998's biggest and most successful tours, the "Family Values Tour," which had, at various points, Limp Bizkit, Korn, and Rob Zombie on the playlist. Marilyn Manson has appeared on the controversial television program "Politically Incorrect" and has performed small roles in Hollywood films. New metal is striking also because it combines all of the experimental, underground, and alternative elements I have mentioned which have appeared, singularly, in other types of music.

Almost everywhere in today's popular culture, confusion reigns. As more and more real, physical, tangible things become infinitely reproducible thanks to technologies ranging from e-mail and the internet to plastic surgery and cloning, those participating in mass culture become less and less certain about what, and who, is real. This condition has become so significant that it is now inappropriate to use the word "real" without qualifying what one wants one's usage of the word to signify in any

given context, for it can now mean a broad range of concepts and states. We can now travel exactly half-way around the planet and still hear the same music and television programs being broadcast, as well as eat in the same restaurant, as is so lucidly illustrated in Brian Fawcett's book *Cambodia*. It appears that the paths of exploration and the lines of thought followed by popular musicians and screenwriters and by cultural academics are drawing very near to each other; new metal is not the only medium exploring and reflecting the issues I have discussed. In the film *Thirteenth Floor*, computer scientists invent an entirely simulated virtual world, only to discover that their own world is a simulation. In *The Matrix*, our world is shown to be a simulation created by Artificial Intelligence entities with the purpose of keeping human beings docile and submissive while the entities, in order to survive, drain the electrical energy from crops of human bodies. Characters become omnipotent inside the virtual reality of the matrix simply by opening their minds and willing their desires into being, just as Deleuze and Guattari argue, in *1000 Plateaux*, that anything can be accomplished by travelling along lines of flight in rhizomatic schemes. It is no coincidence, then, that the film's protagonist illicitly sells a mysterious something contained on a miniature computer disk, which he hides in a hollowed-out copy of Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*. Even television programs such as *The X-files* and *The Outer Limits* are suggesting that Rod Serling's original *Twilight Zone* is nowhere else but our own world. While Korn's Jonathan Davis is pleading that he doesn't know himself anymore, characters in *The X-files* and *The Thirteenth Floor* are realizing that they have not been exactly who they thought they were.

With the vast expansion of the middle class in the last century, the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture have become as blurred as everything new metal vocalists are singing about; it appears that the gap between the "serious," "informed," and "important" thought of our learned institutions and "frivolous," "light," and "harmless" entertainment is shrinking. Given that a profitable mass culture film is using the work of Jean Baudrillard as a set piece, it appears that today's mass culture contains very important insights into, and reflections of, today's society, world views, and economy. While trends in both the academy and mass culture have often reflected important phenomena and sentiments occurring in society, it has been less common for academic discussion to address elements of popular culture (although cultural studies has been gradually moving in this direction), and for works in popular culture to allude to academic treatises. Today more and more so-called high-cultural expressions and low-cultural expressions are articulating, with postmodern voices, concerns regarding real life and authentic identities being overtaken by—or simply becoming—simulation. It is no longer easy for academics to ignore warnings uttered by popular culture, or vice versa.

New metal's popularity is also very striking. In the past, mass culture has generally craved and supported happy, positive, comforting expressions which confirm the satisfactory nature of the state of the world. There has even been a generally proportional relationship between the "harmless," benign, "happy" qualities of given heavy metal bands and their popularity, as has been illustrated by the popularity of bands such as Twisted Sister and Guns and Roses. Regardless of the quality of the work in question, music and film have generally been hampered in their

popularity by carrying a dismal tone. Films such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and *Amistad*, even bearing the filmmaker's typical happy endings, are examples of high quality productions which have not been given permanent places in the daily conversations of most North Americans, perhaps because of their unhappy stories. Mass culture has generally looked to popular entertainment for an outlet of escape from unhappiness. But in the 1960s and 1970s this began to change. American folk music became an outlet for angry protest, followed by punk and heavy metal. Still, partisans of these new styles were either relegated to the underground or converted into forms more palatable to record-marketing executives and record-buying teenagers. Then, at the beginning of the 1990s, Nirvana and Pearl Jam brought unhappy music briefly to the tops of popularity charts, opening the door for bands such as Soundgarden and Alice in Chains. A handful of bands like Nine Inch Nails and White Zombie held the place of unhappy music in popularity charts and dance clubs, almost like bookmarks, after the demise of grunge. Then Rage Against the Machine started new metal but it was Korn who catapulted new metal into its trajectory towards hyper-popularity with their self-titled début album in 1994. Now, as I have already described, music that is more unhappy, dissatisfied, and angst-ridden than any music which has occupied this position in the past is entering charts at the number one position. Why is the demographic group who used to love songs like "California Girls" and groups like New Kids on the Block now collectively gravitating towards such unhappy, insane utterances? Why have adolescent car stereos rejected light-hearted high school anthems like "Smoking in the Boys Room" for such twisted songs as Limp Bizkit's "Break Stuff" and Korn's "Freak on a Leash"? This generation

has ousted those carefree songs and replaced them first with such still-comprehensible, straight-forward songs as Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Pearl Jam's "Daughter," and subsequently with bizarre, quasi-authentic identity-crisis songs like Marilyn Manson's "The Dope Show" and Korn's "Got the Life." Is the top of music popularity charts really the place for explorations of postmodern concerns about simulacra, or anxieties about the lost locus of authenticity?

Whereas before, heavy metal vocalists who were relegated to underground subcultural scenes stood tall and wore proud faces soaked in machismo, stomped about the stage powerfully, or made love to their microphone stands, today's new metal vocalists literally bounce up and down in pure rhythmic dancing motions, pumping their fists as their bodies match the music while their faces contort to match the anguished lyrical content. This paradoxical behaviour is a reflection of the new metal phenomenon: popular celebration of unpopular emotions.

In the popular media, dancing has seldom been an act of anger or confusion. Generally dance has accompanied love songs or harmless pop songs, like in the songs of Michael and Janet Jackson. Yet now heavy acts like Limp Bizkit include dance on their stages and Korn's Jonathan Davis asks listeners, in his lyrics, to "get your boogie on" and "come dance with me." Generally, "unsettling" experiences have been those which produce sensations of anxiety, unease, and discomfort. But "unsettling" is a very appropriate adjective for this new music towards which many people are gravitating. Perhaps new metal audiences perceive their own experiences reflected back to them in new metal.

New metal is the music of a generation that is nearly completely devoid of innocence—a generation that has produced a pre-teen anti-child-labour crusader, childhood sex and drug abuse, and countless American gun-toting children. The loss of innocence felt by North American youth began to be expressed in grunge music, but that music clung to a hope that, by forcing them into the open and discussing them frankly, the evils it expressed could be banished. This did not happen. New metal expresses a finalized traumatic fall from grace for youth. Instead of "deuce coupes" and daddy's T-birds, instead of school dances and surfboards, popular music has now labeled its fans "The Children of the Korn," who were "born from your porn and twisted-ass ways ... sitting in a daze, in a purple haze," with Jonathan Davis as their leader, warning that "you better check my pulse 'cause nothing seems to faze." Today's children, as reflected by new metal, cannot be children. They know too much, and have seen and heard too much. They cannot be innocent, naïve children, and yet, naturally, they cannot be adults. They cannot be well-behaved because media imagery will cause their peers to mock them, but they cannot be delinquent because they will be punished. Thus today's youth are utterly confused, and see themselves reflected in new metal's messages and imagery.

The messages contained in new metal are not limited to a simple statement about the loss of innocence suffered by today's youth. As I have stated, new metal is also characterized by postmodern elements which reflect and express its culture's increasing confusion regarding identity, reality, illusion, and truth. Examining new metal from an objective distance—looking beyond the immediate torment in the music—can invite larger considerations regarding the nature of culture as a whole.

The convergence of popular and intellectual/academic concerns, being postmodern in itself, can lead to an investigation of what constitutes postmodern culture today, and what postmodern culture is saying about today's social conditions. If, as Baudrillard and Korn seem to be saying, *everything* is a duplication of something else, then perhaps *everything* is postmodern, in which case nothing is really postmodern except for the entire *gestalt* of our world. If the "post" in postmodern signifies novelty, and everything is postmodern, then perhaps novelty is not possible, perhaps nothing can ever again be "new."

One effect of the postmodern turn in culture, the narrowing of the gap between the popular and the intellectual, does point to new possibilities. For example, I myself have become an embodiment of this process/condition in the very act of studying a mass cultural product from the position of the academy. Rather than remaining positioned comfortably within the walls of a university and scrutinizing mass culture from a distance, I have come from the realm and substance of that mass culture and brought information about and experience of it into academic discourse. The fact that new metal shares the concerns of academics (one might argue that in new metal popular culture is "catching up" to academic study) may cause us to wonder about the meaning of postmodernism, as well as postmodernism's lifespan: are we not facing the need for a new "era" in our literary/cultural continuum? If modernism preceded postmodernism, what is postmodernism preceding? New metal complains that present reality is dubious, shifting, and blurred.

My study of the phenomena reflected by new metal reaches far beyond the scope of the music or even of popular culture and invites further investigation into the

effect of hyperreality and absolute advertising on the psychology of individuals, on the behaviours of different groups of people, and on interactions between individuals and groups. Other dimensions of new metal such as differences between the interpretations of this music by males and females and the role of different cultures and ethnicities in new metal and new metal's relevance to those cultures merit analysis. There is also the evolution of new metal itself. The bands I have examined continue to release recordings and top charts. Indeed, Limp Bizkit's lp recording "Significant Other" was released while I was working on this thesis, and Korn released a fourth full-length album, entitled "Issues," as I completed it.[2]

My study of new metal has been a part of my attempt to draw attention to the state of culture on a larger, more widespread level. New metal is but one facet of a culture reflecting the deep-seated ontological, spiritual, and existential anxieties plaguing our society. It is important that we listen to what is being said by new metal artists as well as by intellectuals such as Jean Baudrillard, for we need to come to terms with the possibilities that lie before us. We may then actively choose and determine the future of our culture and avoid Marilyn Manson's dire lyrical prediction: "Capitalism has made it this way. Old fashioned fascism will take it away."

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[2] "Issues" leans far more towards traditional songwriting than Korn's previous three records. It includes none of Jonathan Davis' "speaking in tongues," very little record scratching, less experimentation with guitar sounds and techniques, and less lyrical concern with issues of identity, reality, and truth. The lyrics instead focus more on persecution, violence, and disappointment, and the music is oriented more towards rich textures than haunting atmospheres. In terms of my analysis, "Issues" is a "stick in my spokes," so to speak, and, in terms of the "direction" Korn is pursuing, it causes the band to veer away from my conclusions about their work. This is why further study of new metal is required.

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